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A daughter of kings

Katharine Tynan

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A Daughter of Kings

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BY

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KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON,

Author of "Her Father's Daughter," etc.

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A DAUGHTER OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

MISS ANGEL.

WHEN John Corbett of Minster was left a widower with three boys and four girls, it was confidently anticipated by the gossips that he would be a married man again before it became necessary for any one to think of launching the girls into society and the boys on various paths to honour.

The gossips were mistaken, as they often are. The years passed and Mr Corbett seemed quite satisfied with his celibacy. The children had the best nurses, the best governesses and tutors that money could procure. They had never seemed to miss their mother. They were one and all intensely devoted to their silent, strong-faced father. Minster was the happiest home imaginable, as it was certainly the most beautiful, with its long, low front, its ivied walls and twisted chimneys, its gardens and pleasaunces, its lake with swans and water-lilies.

It was stranger than a fairy-tale that John Corbett should be master of Minster, the stately place outside the park walls of which there yet stood the cottage in which he had been born.

When he was a lanky lad of thirteen or fourteen, doing odd jobs on the neighbouring farms, spending his leisure in constructing from the most primitive materials complicated little plans and models, all cog-wheels and rattling springs, old Squire Sachevarell of Minster had come upon these evidences of the boy's tastes accidentally.

Old Mrs Corbett had been all in a flutter at the discovery.

"He's not that idle, sir," she said. "He'll turn his hand to honest labour as well. 'Tis of evenin's or far into the nights he plays with the likes o' that there."

John had just come in, grimed with field-labour, and stood awkwardly turning his cap about in his hands while his mother apologised for him. He was more conscious of Miss Angel than he was of the Squire. Miss Angel Sachevarell, white as snow, golden-headed, ethereally delicate and exquisite, fascinated the lad to the exclusion of that magnificent person the Squire. He was only conscious of Miss Angel as he turned his cap about in his hands.

"Idle! my good soul," said the Squire. "Tut, tut! this is not idleness. Show me your fingers, lad."

John Corbett extended a hand, blushing rose-red under his grime because he was conscious of

its grubbiness, and that Angel's clear eyes full of light were upon it.

"Ah!" said the Squire, as though to himself. "Tending to be spatulate, and going off suddenly into the imaginative point. The lad has a genius for mechanics. He shall have his chance."

John was put to school, through the good offices of the Squire. When he had left school he went to engineering. Later, he was sent by the firm who employed him to Australia. Before he went he had broken a sixpence with a pretty round-faced girl whom he had known from his childhood, who had improved within her opportunities as he had done and had become a schoolmistress.

Many wakeful nights, many painful days, passed before John made the discovery that brought him fame and fortune. He gave his name to something so simple and cunning that it was a marvel it had not been thought of thousands of times before. He was offered dazzling sums for his patent, but he preferred to accept a partnership in the old firm, towards which he was conscious of a simple loyalty. Within a very short time the new invention had superseded all other things of the same kind on the market, and John Corbett found himself a rich man and likely to be very much richer.

There followed a few bewildering years when the firm was establishing branches and agencies all over the world. The new young partner in the firm—the elder partners were comfortable, kindly Quakers, no longer young—seemed to

be incessantly afloat or in trains. Then a breathing-space came. At last he had time to return home to marry Hetty, and to lay in her lap fruits of the years such as neither of them had ever deemed possible in their wildest dreams.

He went to see his old mother before his marriage. With a curious, shy hesitation he asked for the Squire and Miss Angel. He had never forgotten the large eyes, full of light under their transparent lids, upon his grimy fingers.

The mother,—who did not realise yet that her Johnny was grown a man of importance, although she basked in the comforts and luxuries with which he surrounded her,—the mother solemnly shook her head in its white cap.

“Glory takes unto itself wings and riches fly away,” she said. “And Squire Sachevarell is dead: and Miss Angel sits there all alone, with the bailiffs at the door.”

“Good heavens!” cried John, greatly shocked. The Sachevarells had seemed to him beyond the mortal lot of sorrow and loss.

“Aye, indeed, lad,” went on the mother, “and they do say, that if the place be sold over her head ’twill kill Miss Angel. Yet folks is greedy for their money, and already the sale is in all the newspapers. The Duchess, Miss Angel’s one friend, is away, and in sore trouble herself, her only boy lying sick to death. There is no one to help Miss Angel.”

There was some one. John Corbett went back thoughtfully to the great building which now housed the firm. He spent a couple of hours

after working hours shut up with ledger and bank-book. A day or two later Minster was withdrawn from the market, having been bought by a private purchaser.

Miss Angel sat in the oak-panelled room at Minster which had been her father's study, under her mother's portrait, and wondered how soon the blow would fall.

She was whiter than ever now, and her head on its slender neck seemed scarcely able to support the masses of pale gold hair, fine as floss silk and as soft. The dark room framed her as a dark panel a Fra Angelico angel. There was no fire in the grate though the day was chilly. She drew her Indian shawl about her and shivered, as much at her thoughts as for cold.

"Will you see Mr Corbett, Miss Angel?" asked Bradbury, the old butler who had not deserted the Sachevarells' sinking ship.

Some memory stirred in Miss Angel.

Could "Mr Corbett" be that son of old Mrs Corbett at the Mead Cottages whom her father had been interested in and helped? She knew vaguely that young Corbett had done his benefactor credit and had acted handsomely by his mother. She remembered in a sudden flash of memory the velvety brown eyes of the lad, faithful and kind as a dog's.

"Ask Mr Corbett to come in, Bradbury," she said, in a startled way.

John Corbett came in. They looked at each other over an immeasurable distance of time and change. Miss Angel was fading away from earth.

John Corbett had become a gentleman, in manners, in looks. He was quietly well-dressed : and one could not but respect that face.

"I remember you," said Miss Angel softly, "though you were only a boy when I saw you last. Papa would have been so pleased."

John Corbett stammered something in a bewildered way about his gratitude for being remembered.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Miss Angel, with that ethereal smile of hers. "Papa would have been so pleased. Oh papa! I remember papa that day. You know that he has left me, Mr Corbett, and that unless I make haste to follow him I shall not have a roof to cover me?"

John Corbett stared at her as though he saw a heaven missed and for ever out of his reach.

"I came to talk about that," he said brokenly. "Yes, I knew the Squire was gone. But Miss Angel, Minster is yours as long as you will stay in it. I have just bought it. What would Minster be without you? I will intrude as little as I can. I shall be obliged to put in gardeners and other servants or the place will suffer. But you are its mistress still. You owe as much as that to the lad your father picked out of the gutter."

His voice was shaken with agitation. He began to realise clearly that Miss Angel's face had been before him all his days, the star to his ambition, the goal towards which he had dimly tended. And soon his star would have fallen from its sky, and only an ache of emptiness would remain to him for its sweet company.

Miss Angel was looking at him now with an expression in which many emotions contended.

"Papa," she said again, as though she appealed to some one just out of sight, "Papa! What would you have said, my dearest? Oh, Mr Corbett," turning on John her heavenly gaze,— "how shall I thank you for your kindness? It is true that you offer me peace for the time I stay. But is it not too much?"

"I should be a farm-labourer to-day if it were not for the Squire," said John, his eyes pleading hard.

"Papa said you would have made your way, that yours were gifts too great to be extinguished by circumstances. I think papa would tell me that I might accept your most delicate kindness and generosity. How am I to thank you?"

"By staying a long time, Miss Angel; by forgetting that there is such a person as John Corbett in the world; by remembering only that Minster is yours."

"My dear friend,"—Miss Angel's two hands, delicate as summer moths, fluttered into John Corbett's reverent grasp. "I accept it all, and I shall stay as long as I may to thank you. But that will not be for very long."

As a matter of fact Miss Angel lived just six months, and after her death John Corbett came into possession of his own. He dealt gently with Minster, altered little, renovated scarcely at all. He had taken over the place, bag and baggage, plate and pictures and all. The price paid was little enough to satisfy the late Squire's creditors.

The Squire and Miss Angel had paid the penalty that sometimes is necessary when an idealist strives to be practical.

Hetty Ambler married John Corbett and became mistress in Miss Angel's place. She never succeeded in playing the part very satisfactorily, though she made many and mistaken efforts, even to trying to bring the old servants of the Sachevarells into harmony with her ideas of discipline and simple living. However, she never discovered her failure, any more than she discovered that she did not entirely fill the mental horizon of the man she had married, who was so invariably tender and gentle with her.

Yet husband and children were sincerely fond of the good, painstaking, narrow little soul, and grieved sincerely for her when she was taken. Still her place was filled up as easily as a footprint in the sand. The little rules and regulations were no longer enforced or insisted upon. Her toiling efforts to keep up with her husband's interests no longer distressed the beholder: no one could ever say if John Corbett had noticed or had not noticed that his wife, instead of being content to be a quiet little motherly woman, made terrible efforts to appear his intellectual equal. He was always the kindest of husbands: and his wife would have been the last person in the world to suspect that she had any cause for complaint.

About six months after Miss Angel's death, her friend, the Duchess of St Kilda, returned home, having laid her son to rest in the sunny

Southern country where she had taken him in search of the health that money could not buy.

Almost at once she came to see John Corbett, and took his hand in her own strong, manly grasp.

"I have heard all you did for Angel," she said, "and I shall never forget it to you. You did what I ought to have done, but that, alas, I was too deeply and sadly engrossed in my own troubles. For Angel's sake, Mr Corbett, I am your friend for life. I hope you will give me the privilege of your friendship."

John Corbett's mouth took the faintest, most delicate line of humour. To think that he had attained to a Duchess's begging the privilege of his friendship! Then it became grave and sweet again.

"I shall be only too glad, your Grace," he said. "What I did was nothing. Her father made me what I am. I only wish she would have stayed and kept the place. We didn't want it."

"H'm!" said the Duchess to herself as she thought over it. "People are not ready to give away places like Minster every day. I wonder what the little bourgeoisie wife would think of it! And I wonder how she will fill my Angel's place!"

When his first girl was born John Corbett had her named Angela, and Hetty did not at all object, thought it indeed quite fitting that there should be another Miss Angel at Minster.

But the father had no such thought. Rather indeed he felt as though the child made him a

shadowy sort of link with the lady of his boyhood's adoration. He had a fanciful idea that Miss Angel would be pleased, and from somewhere would smile upon the child.

He was where his business was concerned a capable, matter-of-fact business man. But sometimes when eyes were off him or he forgot that they were on him, a mist of dreams would come down on the clever, shrewd face. Somewhere in that mist the star which was Miss Angel was shining.

CHAPTER II

ANNE

THE Duchess had not forgotten her promise to be John Corbett's friend. Indeed she was the plague of his life, or would have been if he had not been so entirely self-contained, and so sincerely devoted to her.

She was always looking after him and his big young family, always wanting him to take the place in the country to which his talents and his wealth entitled him, to go into Parliament, to take up public questions, to do all manner of things for which he had no earthly inclination.

"There is absolutely no reason why you should not follow in the footsteps of Mr Chamberlain," she said in her deep bass voice. "In this country where Trade is the only thing that matters—I adore Trade myself because it marries into us and gives us its money—the country should be run by business men. When old Mr Osborne dies. . . ."

"I haven't the slightest ambition to follow in Mr Chamberlain's footsteps, even if it were possible for me to do so," said John Corbett, laughing. "And what would become of Armytage,

Armytage and Corbett, if I were to enter Parliament, I should like to know? No, Duchess: let me stay where I am in my modest sphere of usefulness. You will easily find some one more fitted for the dazzling position you offer me."

The children, too, were on the Duchess's mind. Angela had grown up a tall fair child with the oddest suggestion, to the Duchess's mind, of the dead Angel. There was a look of the sheathed lily-bud about her; and her dazzling fairness enhanced the resemblance. She was the Duchess's god-child, and a pliable, charming creature with a soft voice and a gliding, graceful step. She swayed in moving as the flowers of the field sway in the summer air. There was much to be made of Angela.

Then there was Arthur, the second son, a dark-faced, brown-eyed lad very like his father. John, the eldest son, was in the business already: and the Duchess's plans were less concerned with him. Then there was Hetty, more like Hetty Ambler than the Duchess altogether liked: and there were Cyril and Hilda and Ursula, little ones, whose future need not yet be a cause of trouble to their friends.

John Corbett had acted precisely as one might expect him to act, and in her heart of hearts the Duchess loved him for it while she deplored it.

He had set up his mother, a simple old peasant woman, among the pictures and belongings of dead and gone Sachevarells. The Minster carriages, the Minster servants, were at her beck and call. Her son surrounded her with all manner of lux-

uries. The servants might turn up their noses at the old white-capped dame, seated in a place of honour in the Minster drawing-rooms, or at the Minster dining-table. They might whisper among themselves that the luxurious rooms he provided for her were out of place for such as she. Be sure they showed no insolence in John Corbett's presence, or indeed anywhere where the fact might be reported to a master who knew how to win respect from his dependents. His mother must drive with him to church every Sunday and sit up in the Minster pew, below the heraldic lozenges in the south window, the memorial brasses of the Sachevarells.

More, he had no desire and no capacity for shedding his friends. The younger generation of Armytages, the friends whom he had made in his progress, mainly wealthy men of business like himself, with their wives and daughters, met the Duchess of St Kilda in the beautiful rooms where she remembered Angel.

"I shall never change him," she said to herself. Perhaps in her heart of hearts she did not very much want to. "But the children must be trained to look higher. Their poor mother's children could scarcely fail to have a middle-class trend,—all except Angela," she added hastily. "I can't set about forming those tender plants myself. Yet it is something I owe to the father that it should be done. I'll present Angela, even if I have to wear carpet slippers to do it. But there ought to be somebody to take a mother's place towards them. There comes a

time when even the most high-priced governess fails. I must think this out very seriously."

The Duchess put on her considering-cap during a drive home from Minster, where she had encountered a rout of Armytages and Dunstons and Smiths and Marshalls, all representatives of wealthy families in the neighbouring manufacturing town of Elsdon.

Suddenly her face cleared. She caught sight of a square of looking-glass fronting her in her brougham, and waved her hand to her own reflection therein.

"Anne Daly," she cried. "Anne Daly is the very person. To think I should not have thought of her before! Why, it is the happiest of inspirations!"

Acting with her usual impulsiveness she stopped the carriage and bade the coachman drive to Elsdon, to the business house of Messrs Armytage, Armytage and Corbett.

An obsequious clerk took her name to Mr Corbett. John came downstairs to meet her, with a fine courtesy which had nothing to do with her rank, and led the way to the naked austere room with its high office desk and stools, its one ancient easy-chair, in which so many of his hours were spent.

He placed the Duchess in the easy-chair.

"I suppose you don't know that there's a spring broken in it," she said, looking up at him whimsically. "And if I were you, my dear man, I'd treat myself to a new carpet and some new furniture."

"I'm too old for change," said John. It was true that his temples showed hollow under a powder of gray. "I am sorry I haven't a more comfortable chair for you, Duchess. But indeed I never knew the spring was broken. I seldom use that chair."

"No?" The Duchess's enthusiasm had waned ever so slightly. Supposing Anne were to prove impracticable. However, she put the thought from her mind.

"I am just come from Minster," she said. "Angela is lovelier than ever."

"Ah!" The father's brown eyes looked pleasure and gratitude. "You are very good to her, Duchess."

"Not at all, not at all. She is my god-daughter and another Angel. The place was overrun by young persons of both sexes. Those children are getting past Miss May. Angela is too young to be mistress of your house, yet too old to be influenced by a good dowdy creature like May. Put a lady at the head of your household."

"A lady!" He looked his stupefaction, and there were reluctance and fear mingled with the stupefaction.

"Not that, my dear man," said the Duchess with a broad, humorous smile. "She wouldn't marry you, not if you were Apollo, unless your family could trace its descent back at least six centuries."

"She?"

"My friend, Anne Daly of Witch's Castle in

the county of Donegal, Ireland. She has the bluest blood in Ireland. I believe they have a pedigree tracing descent from the Garden of Eden. She looks on all us English as persons of yesterday. What is the Norman Conquest, indeed, compared with the Garden of Eden?"

The handsome gray eyes under the bands of steel-gray hair danced with merriment.

"I met her one year at Lugano. She was with her old grandmother, Madam Daly, who used to be known at half the courts of Europe for her wit and beauty, and was such a good comrade that Empresses fought for the pleasure of being her hostess. You really wouldn't have given ten shillings for any frock Anne ever wore, while her poor little trunk was the size of a hat-box. And you know we were tremendously smart at the Hotel. But she held her head higher than any of us, and passed us by as though she did not see us. Yet she knew every man, woman and child of the place, from the snuffy old *padre* to the disfigured child of the melon-seller. They all adored her. So did all the servants of the Hotel. La Bella they called her. I know she emptied out her little purse among them, and afterwards I believe she starved, for she had a rather wan look and did not appear at meals. Old Madam Daly had eyes like diamonds, and little bits of Limerick lace pinned about all over her. The first time I sent her an offering of very choice fruit I expected the girl to fling it at my head. However, she didn't: she thanked me very sweetly and graciously, as

though she had been a queen. After that we became great friends. I found out the simplicity and sweetness of the character behind the crust of what seemed an impossible pride. I learned to love Anne."

She paused for breath, and John Corbett stood waiting, his eyebrows lifted a little in a way the Duchess knew.

"You wonder what all this has to do with you," she said. "Well, I have had a letter from Anne. She refers in the proudest way to the poverty which grows more pressing at Witch's Castle. I think she might accept a handsome salary to take the head of your table and look after your girls. She won't come to me, although I should dearly love to have her. The old grandmother has lost the very last remnant of her rents, and I expect poverty at its nakedest sits on the hearthstone of Witch's Castle. Anne wants money and to earn it. I can read it between the lines of her letter. I wouldn't give her to every one. I give her to you."

"Ah!"

At the dolorousness of John Corbett's voice the Duchess laughed out.

"You will capitulate as soon as you have seen her," she said, "and will wonder why you ever groaned at the prospect. Angela wants some one to take her about. The younger girls want the influence of a lady. My dear friend, for your boys and girls alike, you could hardly have a better influence than Anne's. To elders and worldlings, her sense of honour, her refinement

and delicacy, might seem fantastic and overstrained. The young should be Quixotes. Anne is the feminine Quixote. You must have some one to give countenance to your girls. Anne is twenty-nine, though she doesn't look it. My friend, let me write now to her. There is still time to catch the afternoon post."

Mr Corbett sighed.

"She sounds dreadfully uncomfortable," he said.

"She has delightful manners," said the Duchess.

"In a week's time you will all be wondering how you lived without her."

"My boys will fall in love with her."

"The very best thing they could do."

"She will interfere with Mason. I am very well content with Mason's housekeeping, although she grows old."

"She will adore Anne: they always do. Being one of the Sachevarells' old servants, Mason will not look down on Anne for her poverty and her dependent position. 'Look down on Anne!' How amazed she would be!" The Duchess quoted herself with enjoyment. "Why, even the Sachevarells would be only a tribe of Norman robbers to Anne."

"She will be unhappy herself."

"Minster will delight her when she has forgiven it for its luxuries, and Angela will be a child after her own heart. You will give her a month every year to go home and see old Madam Daly in her witch's eyrie."

"You have settled it all, Duchess. But what

right have I to the services of a granddaughter of Madam Daly?"

"The daughter of a hundred kings! It is beyond your deserts. I quite agree with you. My dear friend, I have thought it all out. It is necessary for your girls. Believe that I am doing the best thing possible for you."

John Corbett looked up with the winning smile which he kept for his best friends and bestowed but rarely on them.

"I am an ungrateful fellow," he said, "and you shall do with me as you will. Of course I don't know about boys and girls, especially girls. How should I? It was a misfortune that there was no woman, no relative of their mother's or mine, to come and look after them when she died. My mother is too old; and of course it is a different world."

The Duchess sent him an odd look from under her eyelids.

"Anne will do all that, my dear man," she said. "You may set your mind quite at rest. Next year we must have Angela up to town and I shall present her at Court. But meanwhile—Anne will be an influence. You have no idea, my dear man, of what an influence Anne will be."

CHAPTER III.

THE LETTER.

"Now what can Miss Anne be expectin'?" Mrs Devine, the post-mistress at Ballincrusheen, asked of her subordinate, Eliza Doyle. "It can't be that there's news of Master Brian or we'd be hearin' somethin' about it. Yet she's that onaisy, and keeps steppin' here by the way it's for a bit of a chat, an' askin' promiskus-like, 'Is there e'er a letter for the Castle, Mrs Devine?' as though I shouldn't ha' run over Johnny wid it the instant minit it come if there was to be such a thing."

"I've noticed she's onaisy," agreed Eliza Doyle, with her eyes on her knitting. She was at the critical point of turning the heel of a stocking, else she was accustomed to knit in darkness and light alike. "I'd ha' thought she'd ha' given up Master Brian by this. And I don't *think* it's Master Brian. For, when she hears there's no letter, instead of her face fallin' as would be but natural if 'twas him she expected to hear of, 'tis cheerin' up she does be, as much as to say she'd got another day before she need be expectin' again."

"Go on out o' that," said Mrs Devine, who didn't like Eliza to take too much on herself, although she was secretly inclined to agree. "'Tis too much you do be seein' for all them ould wake eyes o' yours, and your nose perpetual in a ball o' gray worsted. Sure, what would she be steppin' in to ask for if it wasn't somethin' she wanted?"

"It might be somethin' she didn't want," answered Eliza composedly. "If you knew bad news was comin' to yourself you'd just as soon step along to meet it and know the worst that was in it, rather nor be dawdlin' about as happy as the day's long, knowin' that it was waitin' for you at the end of it all."

"You might, Eliza. I wouldn't be sayin' 'twas my way. Never bid the divil good-morrow till you meet him is more in my line. When Pat was alive, Heaven rest him, an' took a lot of boneens or a calf to the market, 'tis keepin' myself warm all day I'd be thinkin' o' the comforts I'd get out o' the money, though somethin' 'ud be whisperin' in my ear that 'twas likely he'd ha' drink taken and made a bad bargain, or ha' the money stole off him. I'm bound to say 'twas what happened oftener than not."

"I'd rather know, ma'am," said Eliza, meekly but obstinately. "Not but what you kept up wonderful, considerin' Pat an' all, an' takes an interest in all the neighbours, an' it 'ud be a pity if you didn't, seein' what opportunities there is in a post-office. But I think Miss Anne 'ud be

the same as me. If there was misfortune she'd rather know it."

"I wonder what's keepin' Johnny wid the bag," said Mrs Devine uneasily. "The train was in half an hour ago, for I see Lord Finvarra's carriage comin' back from it, wid his lordship in it. It's well he didn't stop to ask for his letters, or 'tis gettin' into trouble me and Johnny 'ud be."

"Playin' buttons most likely," said Eliza gloomily. "An' as likely as not the letter-bag's gone out of it clane and clever."

"Give over takin' away my boy's charackter," said Mrs Devine sharply. "It'll be time enough when the post-office does that. 'Tis runnin' before you do be lookin' for misfortune. Aren't you ashamed o' yourself, Liza Doyle? Here comes Johnny runnin' for a wager, an' the bag on his back. Glory be to goodness, look at the knees of his trousers! What did I tell you I'd give you the next time you knelt down in the mud o' the road to play marbles, you bould, on-dependendable child? Let alone the post-bag, not a bit of it that hasn't been through the bushes and the mud!"

Eliza never looked up from her knitting at this justification of her fears and doubts, nor to listen to Johnny's defence of himself, which was that he "only stopped to rest a minit and when he looked round there was a couple o' dogs runnin' off wid the post-bag between them, and he had to bate them over the heads before he could get it from them because they smelt the

drisheen from Cork that came in it the week before to the sergeant."

"He'll be wiser when he's older," said his mother, as she broke the post-office seals, which luckily the dogs had spared, and emptied out the letters on the little round table close to the window. "An' sure he's as good as could be expected for the allowance the post-office gives."

Her spectacles were down on the tip of her nose while she sorted the letters, with an eagerness as though they were all for her and long expected.

The click of the telegraph called Eliza away. When she came back to say that it was only a message about some new sheds Lord Finvarra was putting up for his winter cattle, she found Mrs Devine absorbed in contemplation of a large, square, creamy-tinted envelope bearing a great red seal.

"Here's the letter for Miss Anne at last," she said. "I'd give a dale, Liza Doyle, to know what was inside it. If it wasn't for the sealin'-wax now a steaming kettle 'ud come in handy. But there's no gettin' over the wax. 'Tis from England it is. What do you make of the little thing on the wax?"

"'Tis like a crown to me," said Liza, bending her short-sighted eyes to examine the strawberry leaves.

"Glory be to goodness, it'll be the King or the Queen writin' to Miss Anne. A crown it is, Liza Doyle. Ah sure, th' ould Madam is as much at home with kings an' queens as you,

Liza, wid the greatest commonality. You won't find Miss Anne settin' herself up over that. An' here she comes more betoken, steppin' through the village like a queen herself. An' for all that she does have crowned heads writin' to her, you'll see she'll be as simple wid me or you or any other ould trash as if she were no more than yourself, Liza Doyle."

Whatever Liza might have said in answer to this speech is not recorded, for at that moment Miss Anne Daly came into the outside portion of the post-office with a rabble of unruly dogs at her heels.

"May I come in, Mary?" she asked—it was the softest and sweetest voice imaginable—coming round the little enclosed counter to the half-door which shut off Mrs Devine's apartment. "I see the letters have come. Is there anything for the Castle?"

"I'll just look," answered Mrs Devine, sweeping the letters together. "Won't you step in, Miss, an' take a chair? Have a hate o' the fire, Miss Anne. Och, indeed the winter has come in terrible early, so it has."

Anne Daly smiled, taking the chair of twisted straw ropes which the two women had run to place for her by the side of the fire. It was a beautiful autumn day, and she had walked quickly. The fresh wind had fanned a soft flicker of colour into her naturally pale cheeks.

"It's pleasant weather," she said, watching Mrs Devine ostentatiously sorting the letters into heaps. "I hope you don't feel your rheumatism

troublesome, Mary. And you, Eliza, how is the asthma? I do hope we'll get a nice open winter so that we shall all keep pretty well."

As she said it, the slightest shadow might have been noticed to fall over her calm, beautiful face.

Mrs Devine was a long time finding the letter, and Anne chatted away easily about the village and the village affairs—how Mrs Lavelle was doing, and what the baby was to be called, and the price Mrs Rafferty had got for her pig, and the latest news the Widow Rooney had of her son Joe, who was fighting in South Africa.

With these humble neighbours and friends, the pride the Duchess had spoken of in Anne Daly passed out of sight. Rather, so fine was her courtesy that her manner was almost appealing.

She was beginning to breathe freely. The letters were lying all over the table, a little shower of them like sheets laid to dry on a dark field, and there seemed to be nothing for her. As she talked her eyes wandered around the little room she had known all her life. Mrs Devine's mother had had the post-office before her daughter, who, after a short and stormy married life, returned to help her mother and had finally succeeded her.

There were the daguerreotypes of Mrs Devine's father and mother over the mantelpiece. There was the crazy corner cupboard, with still a few bits of good china and glass among its common things. There was the high, red-backed piano,

of which hardly a note tinkled now. Anne's smallest dog, a Spitz, named Friend, lay on the clay floor at her feet. The other dogs were squealing beyond the barrier of the half-door with heroic self-repression which would break into a clamour of barking as soon as she stood up. Mrs Devine's canary was singing. And there was no letter. Doubtless the Duchess was abroad, and Anne's schemes must await her return. She began to breathe freely.

"Not a screed for the Castle at all," Mrs Devine was saying. Then she thrust her hand carelessly into the letter-bag before shaking it out in preparation for the out-going mail.

"Why, here's a letter, Miss Anne, for yourself," she said in great surprise. "Sure, th'ould bag was near keeping it altogether on ye."

Anne reached out her hand for the letter. The shadow fell on her face as distinctly as the shadow of the waning day crept up the cheap white wall-paper of the room. She looked down at it for a second, and her eyelids fluttered nervously. Mrs Devine thought she was going to open the letter and was conscious of some excitement. But instead of that, after looking at it for a moment, Anne thrust it into her muff.

"Thank you, Mary," she said, "I shan't forget to tell Madam you have those chickens. And Eliza, Madam will make you up the linseed jelly that is so good for the throat."

The dogs set up a great clamour outside, and Anne went off in the middle of it, her last gracious speeches quite smothered in the din.

"Och, sure, Quality's quare," said Mrs Devine, as they watched Anne through the window. "Childer is bad enough, but childer is somethin' you have to put up with, if you have them. But them divils! Look at them jumping on her wid their muddy paws. An' the barkin' o' them, fit to deave you. What did you make of her looks, Liza, when she saw the letter?"

"If it had been from Master Brian I'd ha' thought that maybe she feared that after all the years that was between them she'd maybe find out that he wasn't what she'd been thinkin' him at all, at all. Poor Miss Anne, I wish she'd taken Lord Finvarra when he offered himself, an' not be waitin' on one that'll maybe never return."

"Sure why wouldn't he? You couldn't kill Master Brian, not if you tried. The times I seen him with his two eyes shut up, an' his skull split, an' his teeth rattlin' in his mouth after standing up to any wan that 'ud fight wid him, an' didn't know who he was! An' the times he was drowned! An' the times he tumbled down and broke his neck! An' the times his horses threw him! I tell ye, Liza Doyle, Master Brian, Sir Brian, I should call him by right, has more lives than a cat."

Meanwhile Anne Daly had walked quickly until she was well away from the village. She wanted to be alone to read her letter. When she was well out on the lonely road between the sea and the mountains, she stopped and took out the Duchess's letter. The sun was

sinking in scarlet over the Atlantic. She looked inland to where distant window-panes were lit up as though by the glare of fire. All the landscape was wild and sad. The gulls cried in the autumn gloaming. The peewits called across the bog. Below her, at the edge of the sea a heron stood motionless. There was not a habitation in sight except that which betrayed itself by the glare of burning windows. Yet to Anne it was home and home-like. And she was to leave it!

For a few minutes after she had read the Duchess's letter and replaced it deliberately in its envelope and in her muff, her eyes roamed over sea and land. So she would remember it when she was far away—among rich people! Anne distrusted the rich and riches as profoundly as any anchorite could have done. At the moment she loathed the thought of luxury and splendour. The austere landscape which the night was beginning to blot out made the sum of her desires.

The dogs sat about her in a circle, patiently wagging their tails, ready to fall upon her as soon as she should show sign of movement. A fisherman came up from the sea with a broken oar over his shoulder.

"God save you kindly, Miss Anne," he said. "Tis fine weather we do be havin' for the fish, glory be to God."

"God save you, Mick," she answered. "I hope Bridget and the children are well."

She went on after the man had passed her.

Well, at all events, here, where there was scant provision for the needs of the body, the things of the soul were never far out of sight. To Anne, riches, in a vague way, meant materialism, and she trembled with a strange repulsion and fear at the prospect the Duchess had set before her. She had been absolutely happy in this wild place. She had no desire to travel, to see fine sights and new faces and places. She distrusted change and travel as profoundly as did Thomas à Kempis. Even in Italy she had been homesick. And she had never gone alone among strangers in all her nearly thirty years. But, after all, there was a salary of three hundred pounds, three hundred pounds a year; an enormous sum to Anne, who had never possessed three hundred pence. Why, what comfort it would bring to Witch's Castle, which was becoming a ruinous place, fast tending to a habitation fit only for the owls and the bats. There were so many things Gran wanted, which she was always going without.

Anne set her lips sharply and walked briskly towards home. As she reached the gate leading to the house the sunset fell in ruins and the fires in the windows of the inhabited portion of the Castle flickered and went out.

CHAPTER IV.

AT WITCH'S CASTLE.

MADAM and the Abbé O'Rourke were playing dominoes by the fire when Anne came in.

The room was draughty, and Madam was huddled in a cloak. Her little fingers as they hovered uncertainly over the pieces were claw-like; the firelight caught now and again a reflection in the little old gem rings which were so pretty, so valueless except as curios.

She shivered, as Anne coming in brought a fresh draught of wind through the open door. It was not easy in Witch's Castle to have fresh air, yet not be in a draught. A carpet on the floor would have lifted like a balloon with the sea-wind that came in at every nook and crevice; but the polished floor had only a few rugs on it. The room wanted all manner of things to be comfortable for the old people who used it.

"You are just in time to give the Abbé his tea," said Madam. "He is going to visit Sibbie Roche; she is very ill, poor child. The Abbé thinks the end cannot be far off."

"Ah!" said Anne, with a moan of compassion.

How sad it was that Sibbie should go, with a little child, with a husband who had a romantic attachment for his wife, are enough in this country of unromantic marriages!

She sat down before the little old mahogany Chippendale table which bore the tea equipage. It was less harmless than it seemed, for, open, it made a card-table, its green cloth flanked by little round basins in the wood to receive the money of the players. Many a hard-fought game it had seen, the same table.

"When the devil dies in me and I give up the cards," was a frequent saying of old Madam's, "it'll be time to order my coffin." And no doubt she would be a sportswoman to the last.

Anne's eyes watched the old people as her long slender fingers moved above the brown and purple Worcester china, with its little shining golden discs.

So they would be playing when some hundreds of miles of land and sea lay between her and Witch's Castle, when she would be among the Philistines. At the thought she felt her throat swell and she was obliged to swallow something hard. She pulled herself up sharply and smiled at the Abbé as she asked him if he would have toast or tea-cake. The Abbé belonged to Madam Daly's old days abroad. The Dalys had always had a chaplain, and the Abbé was as hungry for the cliffs of Erin as ever Columba was, so he travelled home to Witch's Castle with Madam when the *débâcle* fell on Madam's splendid days and splendid friends. And there he had lived

ever since in holy poverty, much looked up to by the country-side, and a welcome coadjutor to the other priests in that country of long distances. If he seldom met a brother cleric on his own level of mind or breeding his exquisite old-fashioned manners betrayed no knowledge of the fact. There were hills of the spirit loftier still upon which he and Father Pat and Father Terence met and clasped hands.

When he had drunk his cup of fine-scented Pekoe,—Madam was as particular about her tea as about the little wine she drank, and she had found an old-fashioned Quaker firm to supply her with the precious article,—the Abbé took his cane and went out. He still wore the soft hat, the cassock and bands of the French clergy, and was picturesque by the unimaginative broadcloth of the Irish secular priests.

When he had gone Madam called Anne sharply to her side. It was a sharpness that had the fear of love in the sound of it.

"Sit down by me, Anne Daly," she said, "and tell me what's disturbing you. Sure, I hear it, child, in the sighing of your breath. You came into the room and there was trouble in your steps. It isn't, it isn't that there is bad news about Brian?"

She caught her own breath as she asked. Her grandson's unaccountable disappearance was a grief she kept pushed out of sight, but which now and again had an unpleasant way of introducing its ghost into her merry moments.

"It is nothing about Brian," Anne replied,

coming and taking the Abbé's seat the other side of the hearth. There was never any demonstration of affection between the young and the old woman who loved each other so dearly. No caresses passed between them. It was not Madam's way to be openly affectionate, and Anne could not have broken through the habits of a lifetime if she would.

"It is nothing about Brian," she said.

She had laid her muff on a chair when she came in. She went over to it now and extracted a letter from where it had lain unwarmed by her chilly hands.

"It is a letter from the Duchess of St Kilda, Gran," she said. "You remember her. You liked her at Lugano."

"She was very civil, I remember. She sent me fruit, and I accepted it. She was a well-bred woman, though she had the features of a horse and no charm; her voice was deplorable. What does she want of us, Anne?"

Madam Daly could not remember that she and hers had come down in the world. Nor was Anne the one to smile at the habit of mind which supposed that a Daly of Witch's Castle must be always the giver, never by any chance the recipient.

"I have corresponded with her from time to time, you know, Gran. She has always been kind, and has asked me again and again to visit her."

"And you would like to go? Then go, child, with my blessing. But do not stay away too

long. The Abbé and I will miss you. He hasn't the *esprit* I remember. He grows old, a little dull, perhaps, from association with these rustics. Your gowns, Anne; you must be properly dressed. I have still something that I can part with. There is my wedding flounce, the finest Honiton. It will fetch a hundred pounds as a curiosity to put in a case at a museum. Don't think I grudge it to you, Anne. Why, I meant it for your wedding gown. You shall have it, child. My girl will not go among those English ill-dressed. You shall have my set of garnets, Anne. The stones don't count, but the setting is exquisite. There isn't such a set in the country. The colour on that white neck of yours, my girl, contrasted with your black hair, will take the shine out of their diamonds. You shall have a rose satin like one I had at the Tuileries. Rose is your colour as it was mine. I hope the woman will remember what a compliment it is to her that I consent to your going."

Anne had been trying to get in a word, despite that troublesome lump in the throat which was a new and horrible experience to a calm and repressed nature like hers. At last she succeeded.

"I'm not going visiting, Gran," she said. "The rose satin would be far too fine for me. I have asked the Duchess to find me something to do, and she has done it."

"Something to do, Anne Daly! What do you mean by something to do? There was a quaver of alarm in the old voice that went

to Anne's heart. "It isn't possible you are getting restless now, after all those years? And what is there that you can do? The Dalys may be down in the world, but I haven't brought up my granddaughter to work like a housemaid."

"I'm not restless; I should never be restless with you and the Abbé. Only, Gran, we are very poor: we grow poorer and poorer: and the Duchess has a friend who is willing to give me three hundred pounds a year to take the head of his table and chaperon his daughters. Only that."

Anne smiled wistfully, and the smile, pale as winter sunshine, disarmed the wrath which was the old woman's first impulse.

"Sure, what would you be doing out in the world, child?" she said instead, with curious tenderness. "You were out in it once and then, if you remember, you didn't like it."

"I should never like it," Anne said with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Still, for three hundred pounds a year I am prepared to tolerate it. We want the money, Gran."

"True for you, child." Old Madam's shrewd wits were working away against her pride, telling her that it wasn't for to-day nor to-morrow she must think, but for the long, long time afterwards when she and the Abbé would be laid at rest and Anne would be left on the earth alone; unless Brian should return. In any open discussion about Brian, Madam would have said passionately that Brian would return, must return: would have quarrelled with her best

friend if he or she had held to the contrary : but in her own thoughts it was different.

"True for you, child, we want the money sure enough. Dear me, I little thought when I married your grandfather that I'd ever see my granddaughter going out as a housekeeper. Poor Jocelyn ! it would have broken his heart if the famine hadn't broken it already, and left us as poor as we are into the bargain or helped to leave us. And who is this person, child ? A widower ?"

"A widower : a Mr Corbett with several sons and daughters."

"A gentleman ?"

"A friend of the Duchess. As a matter of fact, I believe his large fortune has been made in business."

Madam's face got red and her voice rose.

"So I'm to live to see my girl, my son's daughter, with her legs under a shopkeeper's mahogany."

"The Duchess says it is only people like this Mr Corbett who have the money to spend. She speaks of him as her friend, so he cannot be a vulgar person."

"I'm not so sure of that. It's surprising where money will carry you. No one knows better than I do for I've been about the world and have seen strange things. But I don't like to hear you defend the dirty guineas that unlock every door."

"I don't defend them," said Anne patiently. "They would never unlock any door of mine."

But three hundred a year is a good deal. It would make things easier for you, Gran, and procure you some comforts you need."

"Don't make an old woman of me, child. I've neither ache nor pain, thank God. As though I'd let you go on the world for that!"

"There is the Abbé. And remember how hard it went with us to pay the interest on the mortgage last year."

"True for you, child. We ought to have a man to help us. What keeps Brian away from us? If Brian were here there would be no talk of your going out housekeeping. You're not,—you're not doubting Brian, Anne?"

"I have never doubted Brian."

"He wouldn't forget his pledged word to you, Anne, and you one of his own blood, too. People blame me for that, for letting there be an engagement between you two so young, and first cousins. It isn't a thing I approve of as a general rule, but it isn't the same with us as with other people. There wasn't another girl I'd have looked at for Brian. The boy would never forget you. Anne, if he did, if he could, why even I would cast him out of my heart for ever. And you're not thinking—you haven't been listening to people who say he won't come back. I know that there are many people who think you ought to have married Finvarra. If you had you needn't be talking of going on the world now. Finvarra's great-grandfather was a leather merchant in Cork. They made a lord of him because he sold his country and voted for the

Union. Very different from your great-grandfather, Anne, my girl, who rode his horse half way into the Chamber to vote against it, because he was near being late through being stopped on the road by Freney and his men. My blessing on Freney, he let him go when he knew what his business was, and mounted him on his own horse, too. They called your great-grandfather 'Daly on Horseback' from that day to this."

Madam had forgotten in this stirring reminiscence the fear with which she began her sentence, nor did she remember it till Anne assured her that she would never have thought of Lord Finvarra even if there had been no such person as Brian in the world. And moreover that no gossip would damp her hope and faith in Brian's returning.

"When he comes back," she said, "we will find that there was some very good reason for his disappearance. How many times have we read of people being cast away in places that had no means of communicating with the outside world. But Brian was always lucky, Gran; you know how many hairbreadth escapes he had. Some day, any day he may be picked up. He may be on his way home to us now. The last thing that would strike Brian would be to write. The first thing we will hear of him will be his voice. You may be sure of that, Gran."

Anne was talking as much to put Madam in good-humour as to encourage herself. She succeeded in the first part of her intention.

"And much obliged he'll be to me," said the old lady, getting up in her excitement and walking about, "when I tell him that you're sitting at the head of an English shopkeeper's table. 'Where's Anne?' he'll ask. He always did come in shouting at the top of his voice, 'Where's Anne?' as though there was nobody else in the world."

"Well, then, you'd better not tell him," said Anne, smiling at the old memory. "Just say I'm gone visiting, and telegraph for me, and I'll come home as fast as ever I can to welcome Brian."

"I would be more becoming," said Madam, with a curious little jealousy for Anne, "if he went to you. And he shall go to you if he returns while you are away from us. I won't have my girl singing 'Whistle and I'll come t' ye, my lad,' to any man, even to Brian."

"Very well, then, he must come after me and bring me back," said Anne.

She had gained the victory, but it would be hard to imagine any one feeling more depressed at what she had gained.

and give you some hot tea. We dine at eight, so that you will have time for a hot bath and a rest before dinner."

They seemed to have changed places, the elder and the younger woman. The awe which Angela would have felt of Anne Daly if she had first seen her in some self-contained moment was prevented for ever by her tender sympathy for the lonely figure as she had seen it under the flaring gas lamp at the railway station. Even in the dimness of the carriage she could see the pale face, pale as Dian herself, in the cloudy masses of dark hair, and she thrilled at its beauty. It is not only men who are thrilled by the beauty of women, but sometimes other women as well.

"At last," she said joyfully, as the carriage drew up under a lighted portico beyond which there showed a hall with a couple of men-servants waiting to receive them. From behind the glass screen of an inner hall came the sounds of laughter and voices.

Now that the motion of the carriage had ceased Anne was conscious of a slight giddiness and faintness, the result of her long journey. She felt a sudden dread of the strangers she was going to meet, an intense longing to be alone. Angela had placed a protecting hand on her arm, had led her through the outer hall, beyond the screen, and closed the door behind them. They were in a large square hall, panelled in oak, with a gallery running round three sides of it: there were suits of armour by the walls, and on the floor old Persian rugs. The fire was hemmed in

by dark hooded settles of oak. A tea-table was drawn close to it. There was a group of young people of both sexes sitting and standing about with cups of tea in their hands. They all became silent as Angela came in with Anne close to her side in an unfamiliar nervousness.

Angela introduced the members of the group. Anne hardly caught a name. The swimming in her head had increased to a throbbing now, and hall, firelight and faces all swam mistily before her tired eyes.

"No, thank you, Hetty," she heard Angela say, "Miss Daly will have tea in her own room and rest till dinner-time. She has had a long journey."

She was deeply grateful for the tact that had understood, and had effected her escape. They went up a staircase from the hall, where the voices and merriment had broken out again, along the gallery, down a corridor, near the end of which Angela opened a door.

The warmth of the room met Anne like a soft breath as she entered it. There was a bright fire in the grate, and electric lights burned in half-a-dozen shaded lamps. Her feet sank in the soft carpet. There was a great expanse of floor. In a corner a little brass bedstead showed under a canopy of chintz. There was a well-filled book-case with the key standing in it: a writing-table, with a new blotter, the ink-bottle freshly filled, pens of different kinds laid in the rack. A paper-case stood open, showing that it was full. There were string, sealing-wax, scissors, many such

things on the table which looked as though it must have been specially furnished. Opposite them as they entered was a dressing-table with a long glass in which Anne saw herself in the ugly travelling cloak from head to foot. There were lilies-of-the-valley in a vase on the table.

Her gaze went from one piece of luxury to another: then came back to Angela's young face, which was watching her own with a certain expectancy.

"It looks," said Anne deliberately, "as though some one had thought of me, of me, Anne Daly, not of an unknown person."

"I thought of you," said Angela, with a sudden ingenuous blush and smile. Angela's blush did no more than tinge the warm pallor of her cheeks. "I hope I thought rightly. If the books are not right you must tell me. They are my choice. I selected the flowers. I thought you would be sure to like lilies-of-the-valley. Ah, and here is Kate."

The door had opened, and an honest country-faced girl came in with a tea-tray.

"I thought you would like Kate to wait on you. She is a very good girl and her grandfather is an Irishman."

"Yes'm," said Kate, blushing. "And I once lived with an Irish cook."

It might have been barefooted Rose or Bridget, Anne thought, looking at the wholesome face with its blue Irish eyes and wide Irish mouth. Her heart went out to Kate.

"You have thought of so much for me," she

said, turning with a wonderful radiant smile to Angela. "I think I shall like Kate very much."

Kate giggled delightedly.

"Grandfather 'll be so pleased," she said. "He's blind and deaf and eighty years of age, and he has the Irish newspaper read to him every Sunday. Please, Miss, shall I stay and put out your dress for dinner and lay your things away in the drawers? I have put everything ready for your bath."

"Not now, Kate," said Angela, speaking for Anne. "Come back at a quarter to eight. I think the kindest thing you and I can do now is to leave Miss Daly to herself."

She went away, taking the maid with her. When the door closed upon them Anne poured herself out a cup of tea and drank it gratefully. She lifted the covers of the little dishes which flanked the teapot, and then replaced them. She was not ready yet for *pâté-de-foie-gras* and chicken sandwiches, for buttered toast and tea-cake.

The tea refreshed her, and after a little rest in the luxurious chair she stood up and looked about her new domain. The luxury of it filled her with wonder. She opened the door of the little bathroom and looked within. The hot water smoked in the bath and the atmosphere was fragrant with fine soap and essences. Her hand touched the bath-towels which lay in a heap. They were warm to the touch.

She lifted a blind and looked out into the darkness. Beyond the darkness through a rift

in the woods was the glare of Elsdon furnaces upon the sky. She went hither and thither, touching one thing after another, feeling the cold fineness of the satiny linen, observing dimly the lace on sheet and counterpane, her feet sinking in the velvety carpets, every sense awake to the gratifications wealth had provided. Then, all of a sudden, she sat down in the hardest chair the room contained, and hid her face in her hands. She was hungry, sharply hungry, for the keen sweet air, the nakedness, the barrenness of Witch's Castle. She wanted to hear the wind pipe along the corridors, to lean from an open window and bathe her face in it while she heard the great assault and retreat of the Atlantic upon the crags below.

How was she ever to live in these heavily-carpeted rooms, the luxury of which stifled her? Even an open window brought no relief. Minister was almost hidden in woods.

For an instant Memory had power to cheat her. She heard the patter of the dogs' feet on the bare floors of the corridor outside her bedroom in Witch's Castle. She heard the sharp cry of the sea-gulls. A naked foot came along the corridor. It was pretty Rose in her frock of pink print, to say that she "had brought Madam her tay, and plase would Miss Anne step down an' pour it out?"

"When I forget thee, O Jerusalem!"

She broke into a storm of sobbing. Oh, for the shaking of doors and the rattling of windows! For the sea-wind under the threadbare carpets!

for the eerie crying of the owls, or the wind, or ghosts in the dismantled upper story!

"When I forget thee, O Jerusalem!"

One of the Abbé's sayings came into her mind,—*"Luxury is the swaddling-band in which the soul has no room to grow."* The comfort and the luxury made no appeal to her. She was an austere creature by nature, needing little of the gratification of the senses. She thought of the reek of the furnaces upon the sky. *"They torture the earth,"* she said, *"to make it yield up money, and what is worse, they destroy souls and bodies. From the lust of gain, Good Lord deliver us!"* But the prayer in her case was surely a prayer of supererogation.

Sitting there, after a time, she was conscious of an ache of fatigue in her limbs. She got up stiffly and took off her hat and cloak. She took her bath, with an odd distaste for the accompanying luxuries, and was refreshed. She came back and sat down in her chair. Her thoughts went back to Witch's Castle and what was happening there. But presently, catching sight of the writing-table, they took a new turn. Suppose she began her journal for Gran, now, this instant, it would be almost as good as talking to her. She would set down everything. She had a shrewd idea that, perhaps, she might not show it all to Gran, after all. Still it was good to write it.

There was a tiny calendar of the year and the years to follow on the table. She marked off two days. Yesterday she had left Witch's

Castle. There were nearly two days of her exile gone. It was a childish thing to do, and Anne was a mature woman, with the eyes of a child. Still, a woman may play the child now and again for a time and take no harm from it.

As for the journal to Gran,—why, that grew so voluminous that while yet her pen scratched away on the thick, creamy paper there came Kate's knock at the door.

She turned round with a smile that made Kate her slave for life. The writing had relieved the tension of her mind.

"If you will put out my black and white silk," she said, "I think I can manage the rest myself. I am accustomed to dressing without a maid; but I hope you will do a great many things for me, Kate, from time to time, and while you are doing them you can tell me about your grandfather."

However Anne might affect people of her own class of life, her power of fascinating her inferiors was undeniable. Kate's heart glowed within her as she unpacked Miss Daly's few possessions and laid the black and white silk across the bed as though it were the garment of a queen.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN CORBETT'S FAMILY CIRCLE.

THE dressing-bell rang as Kate left the room. Anne got up and prepared to make her toilette, wondering a little at her own height as she stood in front of the long glass and twisted the wild, dark masses of her hair about her small head. She had never really seen herself before full length. She looked at her beautiful white arms lifted above her head as she twisted the hair and fastened it with Madam's old garnet pins.

"I shall have to take to a rope girdle and discipline," she said to herself, smiling at her own image, "if I find that I am becoming too much of this world."

The black and white silk had been worn by Madam at a Tuileries dinner, worn once to be discarded next day, since the magnificent queen of fashion of that court and day could not endure a gown worn a second time, or at least till it had had time to fade out of memory. Madam, who was fond of recalling the wild extravagance of those days when she had been bosom friend of an empress, would describe it by the adjective

"sinful," while manifestly enjoying the memory exquisitely in those latter lean days. Some few garments of Madam's had somehow escaped the rapacity of Justine, the French maid, another memory which Madam alternately denounced and deplored; and the black and white silk was one of them.

She was shameless, shameless, that pig of a Justine," Madam would say to Anne. "If she had a fancy for anything of mine, it was no use to refuse it to her. I might weep, I might pray; I might appeal to the good heart I knew she did not possess: Justine would carry off my pretty things before my eyes. On the other hand she could alter a gown so that the eyes of jealousy itself would not know it again: and if she cheated me herself she did not let the wardrobe-keepers do it."

It had been something of a triumph to remodel from the bouffant draperies, held up by rosettes, of the Tuileries frock, a garment long and trailing enough for Anne, but Anne's own clever fingers had accomplished it to admiration. It was exquisite silk, rather a soft silver tissue than ordinary black and white silk, and its *berthe* of real lace added to its distinction. When she had put it on Anne added a rose and a spray of lily-of-the-valley to her adornments. The broad collar of little garnets was clasped around her fine long throat, the bracelets to match were on her arms.

As she went down the stairs, the silk lapping behind her from step to step, soft as flowing

water, she met an elderly woman in a black dress and silk apron coming up. The woman looked at her in a dazed way, then dropped a curtsey as she stood aside to let her pass. But Anne stopped.

"You are . . . ?"

"Mrs Mason, the housekeeper, if you please, Miss. I hope you found everything comfortable. Miss Angela would see to it herself."

"It was very good of Miss Angela." Anne's smile at Mrs Mason was at once gracious and shy. "Everything is delightful. If I want anything I shall come and ask you to help me. There are so many things you will be able to teach me."

She had made her second conquest in the house. Mrs Mason went to her own room in a flutter. She was the last of the Sachevarells' old servants, and she was only tolerant of the now more than twenty-year old régime.

"'Twas like old times," she said to herself, "to see her coming down the stairs. And how sweet she spoke and smiled! That's the real gentry. I haven't seen a lady like her since Miss Angel died, for all Miss Angela's so sweet. To be sure, there's the Duchess, but the Duchess is plain as plain. Why wouldn't she be with her rearing shorthorn cattle, and taking prizes for pigs, and tramping about the fields in all weathers? 'Tisn't my notion of a lady."

John Corbett was standing on the hearthrug in the drawing-room, with his back to the fire. He had come home a little earlier than usual

and had put on evening dress, a thing he had not always been careful to do : and he had no idea how much his lapses in this sort disturbed his servants, nor perhaps would he have cared if he had known.

He had his arm round his daughter Hetty's shoulder. Hetty's hair, which still hung loose, had the colour and the wave of the hair of a red Irish setter. It was a beauty inherited from her mother, who had carefully disguised it in her own case by twisting it away in a tight little knob at the back of her insignificant little head,—also, if the truth must be told, by combing it with a lead comb, which had the effect of giving it a darkly purple hue, horribly suggestive of dyeing. Happily her daughter Hetty was born after the rehabilitation of red hair.

On one side of the hearth a curly-headed, freckle-faced, clean-shaven youth lolled in a chair, evidently very much at home, with a magazine in his hand of which he occasionally cut a page or two.

On the other side was an old lady of about seventy-five, John Corbett's mother. She was knitting : she could not sit with her hands idle ; and a long blue stocking lay in her black silk lap. She had a fichu of lace and muslin and a cap to match, and she had a dignified air. But it was the dignity of a working-woman who has cause for great pride in the son she has borne, never at all the dignity of an old lady. Her skin yet kept the traces of exposure to wind and weather, as her hands showed years

of toil and her shoulders the bend acquired in field labour. But her hair was snow-white, which was a dignity in itself; her eyes were peaceful. She had cause to be content with her son's great estate and fine house, which had not altered his tenderness for his mother, and only occasionally sent a sigh to the memory of the little cottage with its hollyhocks and china-asters and the neighbours who were so neighbourly.

She was a silent old woman with tight, pale lips. She was conscious of her own deficiencies of education, and her affection for her son had made her taciturn lest her ignorance should betray itself in speech before his servants or children or fine new friends. Even the children had hardly ever heard Granny utter three consecutive sentences. Visitors generally took her to be deaf from the silent and patient way she sat aloof from the conversation, knitting her interminable stockings. Her son had sometimes a vague memory of times when his mother had been a talkative and merry woman. He had no idea that the change in her was due to anything but the increase of years. He cared dearly for her and at any time would have sacrificed his own happiness to ensure hers.

The younger children, Cyril, the schoolboy, Hilda and Ursula, two fair-haired, bright-cheeked little girls, stood facing their father, talking to him with all the assurance of affection. There were a couple of tall lads as well: John, who was in the business with his father; Arthur.

who had leanings toward literature. They were all there except Angela. Angela had not yet come downstairs, and it was understood that she was to call for Miss Daly on her way—a necessary kindness, for it was easy for a new-comer to lose herself in Minster; and besides, Anne had not yet made acquaintance with the drawing-room.

John Corbett's children were inordinately proud and fond of him. He was not always able to spend his evenings with them, being a man of such importance in the county as well as in Elsdon. But as soon as the sound of his carriage wheels was heard on the gravel the children had a way of appearing from all quarters of the house. If he came home only to dress for a dinner or some other function, as was often the case, they crowded into his dressing-room while he made his toilet, and were with him to the last moment. Every day and hour of their lives had but deepened his hold on his children's hearts.

They were talking about Miss Daly with a watchful eye towards the door by which she might be expected to appear. The children were pouring out their impressions of her so eagerly as to cause confusion. Despite the ugly traveling-cloak, Anne's beauty and stateliness seemed to have impressed themselves upon the children.

"Not all at once!" said John Corbett, laughing, and lifting a restraining hand. "One at a time. Supposing we begin with Hetty because she's the eldest. What do you think, Hetty? Will she keep us in order?"

"She is very handsome and very proud," said Hetty, moving her head under her father's caressing hand. "I don't think the boys will bring their cigarettes into the drawing-room now she has come, and we shall all have to dress for dinner, and she won't expect Willie to come and make afternoon calls in his cycling clothes and stay to dinner afterwards. And I'm sure she won't have Cyril come into the drawing-room with a tin of worms for bait in his pocket and three inches of mud on his boots. And she'd be shocked if Ursula whistled, or Hilda went taking wasps' nests with Cyril and came home with her eye closed up with a sting, or went fishing and tumbled into the mud at the end of the overflow, as she did last week."

"I don't believe she'd ever see," said Hilda. "She looks like a boy herself for the matter of that. I'll ask her if she has ever taken wasps' nests."

"And as for whistling, there's really no reason why a girl shouldn't whistle as well as a boy. And I'm sure she's not that sort at all," said Ursula.

"You think she'll really expect me to come visiting in a frock-coat and top-hat and ride home three miles to dress for dinner?" asked the young gentleman in the chair, whose name was Willie Armytage. He seemed a little bit alarmed as he looked up at Hetty, and one saw that his expression was so bright and pleasant that it made a plain face charming.

"Never mind, Willie," laughed Mr Corbett. "You must only keep a dress-suit here."

"I'm sure he might as well, he's here so often," said Cyril.

"She may smoke a cigarette herself," said John. "Lots of ladies do; and then being Irish she's bound to be a little bit wild."

"If *she* smoked," said his brother Arthur, "it would cease to be a wild thing."

"I see we shall have to be dreadfully on our p's and q's," said Mr Corbett. "So you think she'll rule us with a rod of iron?"

He looked around the little group of which he was the centre. When he was among his children he was as cheerful and irresponsible as the youngest of them.

"I think Hetty is making horrid stories about Miss Daly," said Hilda of the flaxen pig-tail. "She's a beautiful princess, although, perhaps, she was dressed in a little bit of a disguise."

"She smiled at me," said Ursula with the egoism of youth. "I am quite sure she liked me."

Her father pinched her ear playfully.

"She's a person of no discrimination," he said, and then his face became more serious.

"After all, children," he went on, "she has come really to put us on our p's and q's. That was what the Duchess intended. Miss May was too easy-going with you all, and now that she has been called away it is very good of this lady to come and look after us a bit."

"I'm very glad she has come," said Hilda.

"And I'm very glad too," said Ursula.

"And any one can see that Angela is captivated," said the father.

The door opened and his daughter came in with Anne Daly.

There was the length of the long drawing-room to be traversed, but John Corbett went half-way to meet the new inmate of his house. His manners were always delightful, because, as the Duchess was fond of saying, his good heart taught him the right thing to do; and all of manners that is not concerned with the heart might easily be laid aside and none be very much the worse.

He was almost startled at the beauty of Anne in evening dress. Her dress was cut straight across her shoulders, revealing their beautiful roundness and whiteness. Her face had the innocence of childhood and its fearlessness, and he understood why his little daughter had said she looked like a boy. Her eyes, still stormy from her recent trouble, seemed to him darkly purple under thin arches of eyebrows that gave the face its last touch of distinction.

Anne, on the other hand, saw that her host had a strong, kind, rather massive face: that his hair was just streaked with grey: that his shoulders were broad to match his head: that his manner was easy and well-bred.

Then he was leading her up to the plain-faced old woman in the arm-chair by the fire.

"I think you have met my young people, Miss Daly," he said. "You have yet to make my mother's acquaintance."

After he had effected the introduction he still stood by his mother's chair. He had laid his hand over hers that held the knitting.

"She is so unfailingly industrious," he said. "She puts us all to shame. She will never let me wear a stocking she did not knit for me."

The old mother looked up at him. His eyes met hers and he smiled down into them. Such love and pride was in the mother's face! such tenderness in the son's!

"Ah," said Anne to herself, "I understand now what Gran meant when she said that the English were great through their domesticities."

When she went down to dinner she found that she faced her host at the end of the long dining-table. She had Angela on her right hand and Willie Armytage on her left. But her own gaze was attracted to the other end of the table, where old Mrs Corbett sat on her son's right hand, and he seemed to have no thought but for her comfort.

"I should hate him," thought Anne, "if he had been ashamed of her."

CHAPTER VII

"LOCKING THE STABLE DOOR."

"WELL?" asked the Duchess.

She was sitting in the most comfortable chair she could find in the drawing-room at Minster, holding Anne Daly, who was standing in front of her, by the two hands.

"Well?"

"Not so ill," said Anne, smiling. "I thought I should have hated it ever so much more."

"I foresee it is going to be a tremendous success. You have captured their hearts straight off. There is no doubt that you Irish have a way with you as far as we poor dull Saxons are concerned. They simply think you . . . I won't tell you what they think, Anne. There is no use feeding you on lollypops."

"They would be very unwholesome eating," said Anne, with her serious smile. "I have just been writing to Gran. I was able to tell her truthfully that it was far better than I could have imagined. The first night I came I thought I could not endure it, Duchess. There was such an air of *wealth*."

Anne made so wry a face over the word that the Duchess burst out laughing.

"And what reconciled you, my dear? I beg your pardon for laughing. It was the way you said the obnoxious word."

Anne coloured, ever so slightly.

"Did I?" she said. "I wasn't conscious of it. I suppose it was because I am more used to poverty. We, the good families, are all poor together at home. I know wealth is very good for a great many purposes. I have often wished to possess a little myself."

"You have not told me what reconciled you."

"Well, it was . . . it was Mr Corbett's old peasant mother, sitting up like a queen in the drawing-room, and her son's way to her. It was charming, Duchess, so full of love and honour. I began to perceive then that wealth, new wealth, I mean, need not be necessarily vulgar."

"The plutocrats should be obliged to you, my dear. But—no one could look at John Corbett and think him vulgar. He is a very remarkable person."

"He seems so, indeed," said Anne heartily. "If it were not for him I should have wondered about Angela. Angela might be taken for—for—a duchess's daughter."

"If I had ever had a daughter she would have been plain-looking like myself," said the Duchess. "I never had one nor wanted one while I had my boy."

There was an almost imperceptible pause: then she went on.

"For her father's sake as well as her own, and for another sake that you know nothing about, Angela is as dear to me almost as if she were my own daughter. The other children are good children and creditable children. John Corbett has every reason to be satisfied with them. But Angela is the one I am interested in. I have a project very near my heart for Angela's future. Meanwhile, my dear Anne, I am delighted with the success of my little plan for bringing you over here. I had not realised till I saw you how successful it must be. My dear, *you* will drive the middle-class element out of Minster."

"I!" said Anne.

"You, my dear girl. I could never do it in spite of my title, but you will rout them. I fancy Mrs James Armytage—and there are others like her. You'll make her uncomfortable, my dear. She is a vulgarian; but her girls are very presentable. They have the wit to keep to their Quaker type."

"Why should I make any one uncomfortable?" asked Anne, with wide-open eyes.

"I want you to eliminate, at least, till Angela is married, the middle-class element from Minster. I don't see Angela marrying Willie Armytage."

"Nor I," said Anne. "I don't believe Angela would care for him in that way. But, if those people are old friends of the family here, why should I eliminate them? It is something I should have thought quite unworthy; to make people give up their old friends."

The Duchess lifted her eyebrows comically.

"My dear," she said, "you'll do what I want, but you'll do it in spite of yourself. You ought to like John Corbett, my child. For he thinks very like you, although he is an immensely clever business man, and you are more unpractical and impracticable than the rest of your unpractical and impracticable race. He might have uttered that sentiment of yours."

"I don't see how he could think any other way," said Anne, with a puzzled look between her beautiful eyebrows.

"And the worst of it is that the Armytage youth is a very good sort," the Duchess went on without taking any notice of Anne's bewilderment. "If it were Hetty now instead of Angela, I should think twice before forbidding the banns."

"I don't see any difference in his manner to Angela from his manner to Hetty. He seems a sort of friend of the house. He is always doing things for everybody—mending toys and fishing-rods, doctoring sick rabbits and guinea-pigs, matching silk for Hetty's embroidery and finding new flowers for Angela to paint. I don't know what the house would do without Willie Armytage, so I think he'd better stay, Duchess. He is quite a gentleman. I really didn't think people like him or Mr Corbett or Angela came of a trading stock."

"Ah, you will learn queer things in this country," said the Duchess humorously. "Well, then, if you won't turn out Willie Armytage, I'll give you Willie Armytage. Only he must

be made to understand that it is hands off where Angela is concerned. If you'll only look at him like that, Anne, he'll fall in love with you, and that will remove one difficulty."

Anne started and blushed. Then she lifted from her neck a long chain made of opals that were every shade from pink to azure. The opals were set in an old-fashioned heart-shape setting. From the chain depended a curious locket. It was shaped like a watch, and had a little picture of loves and hearts and darts exquisitely painted on it. Anne held the locket to the Duchess without a word.

"My dear," said the Duchess, taking it from her and returning it to her unopened, "I know quite well what I should find if I opened it. I remember the blue-eyed, red-haired young man whose picture you once showed me. And so you believe still he will come back."

"Gran is certain of it, and so am I. Brian always came back. You don't know how Gran is always praying, wearying Heaven with prayers for Brian's return. It is more touching because Gran is not naturally a very devout person. And the poor people all pray. Brian is the last of the Dalys of Witch's Castle. I think with Gran that God will send him back to her. You see there is more than Brian with Gran,—not that she does not love Brian dearly. But he is the last Daly as well."

"Ah! Family pride does not enter into it with you. The blue-eyed, red-haired cousin—lover—is what you think of."

The Duchess's eyes narrowed themselves shrewdly as she looked at Anne's face. Anne was sitting in a dark velvet chair which threw up her beautiful profile so that her face was like a light.

"I think of Brian in that way, too," she said. "What a misfortune, wasn't it? that all the rest of the family were girls! I have a whole family of cousins, but they are all girls, eleven of them, and poor Aunt Maeve at her wits' end to know how to rear them."

"Ah, well, my dear, I trust he will come back soon and reward all your faithfulness," said the Duchess kindly. She did not say what she thought, that Anne's infatuation was a mid-summer madness. "You are too good for this world, my dear," she went on. "There is no woman I would compare you with except one who is now in Heaven, to which I hope you will not attain for many a year. That was Angel Sachevarell."

"Ah! One of the people who owned this house?"

"My dear, I will tell you about Angel. Perhaps when you have heard the story you will understand something of John Corbett's character."

She told the story; not only the facts of it but her surmises.

"Can't you see it in his face?" she asked at the conclusion. "I can. Oh, my dear, I can't tell you how I feel about John Corbett. To think of how he stood aside in the matter, and cared for her so tenderly. She had everything,

everything that money could buy or love imagine. I am only impatient with him sometimes that he did not take her up in his arms and marry her and carry her off to the ends of the earth to get well. I think she would have married him, my Angel; I think she would have loved him. Just at the end, my dear,—I have never talked about this before: it was something your housekeeper, Mrs Mason, told me,—she said that at the last Angel used to lie on her sofa with her hand in John Corbett's left hand while the other fanned her to give her breath. I believe Angel did love him. My Angel was not one to receive such a love and not return it fully. He closed her eyes at the last, and then he went off and married the dowdy, pretty little woman to whom he had promised himself before he had grown up."

"I daresay it was better so," said Anne: but there was a mist on her eyes. "Perhaps they would not have been happy together in marriage, your Angel with all her traditions of race and a young working man. I suppose he has educated himself as the years went on. And here classes are so sharply divided, unlike Ireland where the good blood is so often in the hut and the base in the Hall. Besides, he was promised to another woman."

"My dear," said the Duchess, "here also it happens occasionally that the good blood is found in the cottages."

Anne's clear eyes looked at her for elucidation.

"Not that good blood spells virtues or brains

any more than it spells beauty and breeding," she went on hastily. "The poor Duke now, he was the greediest of men. He never had any manners when he was hungry. He would snatch a tit-bit from his dearest friend. And I'm sure nobody would ever take me to be a Duke's widow and an Earl's daughter. I might change places with Mrs Thrapston at the inn, and no one would think me out of place."

"I think you look your rank," said Anne; and the Duchess felt oddly pleased at the speech. "But how strange," she went on, "that Angela should be like the dead Angel as you think she is. Do you suppose she watches over his children from another world? And how do you account for the likeness?"

The Duchess thought it not impossible that in the past Sachevarell blood might have mingled with the humbler blood of the Corbetts; but she would not say so to Anne. There was something oddly innocent about Anne. She wondered whimsically whether Anne's opinion of the Corbett stock would be raised or lowered by such a supposition. But she thought it wiser to be silent on the subject.

"Wherever Angel is," she said reverently, "I am sure she does not forget so much love."

That afternoon Angela was late for tea. When she came in it was with a little colour in her cheeks, perhaps from her walk in the frosty air. She was not alone; Willie Armytage was with her; and she explained, with downcast eyes, how Willie had come in earlier, and finding her alone

in the chimney corner, since Miss Daly was busy with the Duchess, had persuaded her to walk with him.

The Duchess glanced at her sharply, and then at Willie's good-humoured face. But Willie Armytage was so invariably happy-looking that one could not be sure if the walk had brought him special reasons for happiness.

As she stood up to go,—her carriage was waiting, and neither the bays nor the coachman approved of the waiting,—her large, clever glance fell on all around, passing quietly from face to face.

Hetty, small and primly pretty like her mother, yet with more brains and more heart than Hetty Ambler had ever possessed,—was she not her father's as well as her mother's child?—was curled up in a corner of the sofa, in shadow, with a novel in her hand. Quite unconscious of observation her small face propped on her hand, she was glowering at Angela, and at Willie Armytage who was assisting Angela to make the tea. There was a woman's trouble in the round, childish face that looked an instant and then was hidden in her book.

The Duchess was conscious of a quick spasm of alarm.

"The child is fond of Willie Armytage, and things are plain to her that are dark to the rest of us. Can it be that he and Angela are lovers? If he has made Angela promise herself to him before she has seen the world or learnt to judge for herself the promise must be broken. And

I'm not going to have Hetty hurt either. Even if she hasn't Sachevarell looks it is no reason why she should be passed over. Willie Armytage indeed! Willie Armytage will have to content himself with Hetty and to be very glad that Hetty will look at him. What has Anne been about, I should like to know?"

Her Grace spoke quite snappishly to Miller, the coachman, who was as fat as his bays and as dignified. Miller was very much annoyed at it, and quite intended to give notice, but finally decided that her Grace, being a woman, must be pardoned, especially as she could never get on without him.

That night Mr Corbett brought home a man to dinner, a young-looking man, exaggeratedly dark and handsome, who wore a priceless emerald as a shirt stud, and two others, absolutely unique, for sleeve-links, who talked of big deals, and big fortunes lost and won, in a sleepy, velvety voice, and watched Anne out of his languid, dark eyes with the air of a connoisseur.

Anne detested him at sight. She could only eat her dinner by keeping her eyes on her plate. The flash of his white teeth as she looked up and caught his smile affected her with positive physical nausea; he was to Anne's mind an embodiment of the world, the flesh and the devil, vaguely apprehended, vaguely feared.

However, she had no idea that she had made an instantaneous and complete conquest. At dinner when she sat silent, her grandmother's little old tiara of pearls and opals crowning her

like a queen, she now and again, under cover of the incomprehensible business talk between the two men and the chatter of the young people, sent one or two looks at John Corbett's quiet face.

Why, what had come to it since yesterday? Then it had seemed to her like many other faces which she encountered in this country, where she was a stranger. This man, whose talk was of bulls and bears, of diamond mines and securities, of politics about which she knew as little: she saw suddenly the graciousness with which he interested, nay condescended to, his guest. It struck her sharply that Mr Corbett, plain in contrast to the other's magnificence, looked honest and true, a friend in need as he had looked to the dead Angel. Her impulsive Irish heart gave a quick throb of sympathy. As he leant back silent and gazed at her down the length of the table with eyes which passed over and through her, she saw for an instant the soul of the man who had loved and succoured Angel Sachevarell, and said to herself that she would never again forget that glimpse into a holy place.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD STOCK.

THE Duchess's fears had been as well-founded as poor Hetty's jealousy.

A day later Willie Armytage interviewed John Corbett at his office and told him that he had asked Angela to marry him and that she had consented.

John Corbett looked at him thoughtfully. Rather to his own surprise he was conscious of a sense of disappointment that Angela should have chosen Willie Armytage. He made an impatient movement of his broad shoulders. Why, what was the matter with Willie that he should object? A good lad, a straight lad, the son of his old friend and senior partner! He ought to have been well-pleased; yet somehow, he wasn't.

However, he extended his hand to the young man and took his in a cordial grasp.

"I have nothing against it, Willie," he said, "except that Angela is too young to be sure of her own mind. And you are but young, too, my lad. Twenty-four! Pooh! What's twenty-four? I was a man at twenty-four; nay, I was a man at sixteen, because manhood was forced

upon me prematurely. But lads like you, born to everything money can give, you keep young, and you may rejoice in it. Not a word of this, Willie, my lad, till you are 'called.' I don't disapprove, you know, but we won't consider it an engagement till you have shown the stuff that is in you. Work for Angela, my lad, as though you had not been born with a silver spoon in your mouth."

Young Armytage blushed; protested that Mr Corbett had been better to him than he had dared to anticipate, and took his leave.

That afternoon Angela had the carriage in town shopping and called for her father.

When he had joined her, and the horses were carrying them countrywards, as soon as the roar and bustle of Elsdon had subsided, he took Angela's hand and held it for a moment fondly.

"I have had a visit from Willie Armytage," he said.

"Yes, papa?"

There was not a tremor in the girl's bell-like tones, and the hand he held in his own did not flutter at all.

"You are pleased, papa?"

"I shall be pleased, my dearie, if it is for your happiness. But you are very young: both of you are young. I told Willie that he must not consider it an engagement as yet."

"And he was satisfied."

"He saw the sense of it. No one, not even Reuben Armytage's boy, shall win my girl too easily. I told him he must work, and be called

to the Bar, and that then we might talk about engagements."

"I am glad he is not in a hurry." Was there something of relief in the girl's voice? "I should be so sorry to leave you and the others and Minster, and Miss Daly."

"When the time comes you will not be sorry," said John Corbett enigmatically.

Angela's simple speech had brought him a sudden sensation of relief, as though an unpleasant weight had been lifted from off his heart. How wise he had been not to consent to an engagement! Before that need be considered, probably the young people would have found out that they had mistaken their feelings for each other. A sudden contrition made him break into praises of Willie.

"If you should like him better than me and the others and Miss Daly and Minster one of these days," he said, "I shall have absolute confidence that I am placing your happiness in excellent hands. You should hear Mrs Reuben about Willie. So good a son must make an excellent husband."

"We have always been fond of Willie, haven't we, papa?" said Angela, as though the discussion were over.

They were close to the gates of Minster by this time. The night was very dark, and the grays were going at a steady pace. Suddenly there was a shout: the horses were pulled up so sharply that the occupants of the carriage were flung violently backwards. Then the carriage stopped.

Mr Corbett put his head out of the window.

"What is the matter, Jones?" he asked.

"If you please, sir," said the coachman, who was clambering down from his box, "there is something in the road and the horses have shied at it. I can't rightly see what it is."

Mr Corbett was out of the carriage before Jones had finished speaking.

"Stay where you are, Angela," he said, "till I see what is the matter."

But Angela did not obey him. She was out in the road, where the coachman was holding one of the carriage lamps in his hand, close on her father's heels. There was a dark figure lying in the road.

"Oh, papa," she whispered at his side as he knelt down beside the figure.

It was that of a young man, noticeably slender and elegant even then, who was lying in the track of the horses' feet. One arm was flung out above his head as though to protect it, but Angela could see the dark refined face, with the little moustache, and the lips of boyish sweetness.

"Oh, papa," she said, "it is the artist who has been lodging at Mrs Thrapston's. See there is his portfolio! He has been away sketching. Oh, have the horses hurt him?"

Mr Corbett glanced at her. He had his hand on the young man's heart.

"He is alive," he said quietly, "but he has rather a nasty cut on his head where one of the horses' hoofs must have caught him. We had better get him into the carriage and take him home. You are not frightened, Angela?"

"Not at all, papa."

He glanced up at her from his kneeling position and was struck sharply by her likeness in the half-light to the dead Miss Angel.

"It is the only thing to be done," he said. "I shall send for the doctor as soon as we get to the house. Come, Jones, lift him! You had better get in first, Angela."

Fortunately the carriage was a roomy one. For one moment as they arranged the injured man his head lay on Angela's lap. She did not move nor withdraw herself. She sat looking down at it, with her eyes full of quiet light as Miss Angel's had been long ago, her hands touching the brown hair in that attitude of receptiveness in which we all accept our sorrows, the attitude of the Mother of Sorrows.

As they drove quickly up the long lime avenue to Minster, Mr Corbett asked her how she came to know of the artist.

"Every one knows about him, papa, except you. You know we are country people and notice every strange face. I had seen him about, carrying his easel and painting. One day I came upon him near the boat-house, painting the further side of the lake. He asked me if it was a private way, and I told him it was private, but that you would not object to his working there. He asked me one or two questions then which showed me he knew a good deal about Minster. He had been probably reading it up in the county history. Later on I called at the inn about a parcel they were to fetch for me, and Mrs Thrapp-

ston bustled out for a chat. She said her lodger showed no intention of going, that the neighbourhood seemed to interest him. I have been wondering, papa, whether, if he was good enough, you would give him the chapel ceiling to do. I should have spoken of it before, only Mrs Thrapston told me about a fortnight ago that he was away. Mrs Thrapston thought he was poor."

"I had no idea that Mrs Thrapston was such a gossip."

"She will talk of this Mr Vallance. She seems to have taken a great fancy to him. She wanted to show me his pictures; but, of course, I couldn't let her do that."

"Poor fellow," said Mr Corbett, looking down at the still figure in the shifting light and blackness of the carriage lamps reflected back from the trunks of the trees they were passing. "Poor fellow! I am bound to do something for him now, Angela. He has been brought to our doors, hasn't he?"

"You don't think he is seriously hurt, papa?"

"I hope not. Dr Pottinger will soon let us know all about it."

They were at the hall door by this time. The young man was very tenderly lifted from the carriage and borne upstairs. Mrs Mason, the housekeeper, who, despite her years, was a mine of strength in cases of emergency, came at once. So also did Anne, and displayed a quiet presence of mind and competence to deal with the business which somewhat surprised Mr Corbett, who had

not known Anne as the Sister of Charity of the Irish country-side.

Pending the arrival of the doctor the young man was laid on a bed upstairs. After a little time the room was cleared and no one remained but Anne and Mrs Mason. The two were excellent friends. Now they stood facing each other at either side of the bed, looking down at the silent figure.

"Miss Daly," said Mason, suddenly looking towards the young lady, "promise me he shan't go to hospital."

"It doesn't rest with me, Mrs Mason; but I am sure that Mr Corbett does not at all intend him to go."

"It would be a burning shame if he were to be turned out of this house."

She spoke with a passion which made Anne look at her in wonder.

"Miss Angela, she says as how Mrs Thrapston at the inn says the gentleman's name is Val-lance," broke out Mrs Mason, with the same curious intensity. "That woman Thrapston says more than her prayers. I don't know what name he calls himself by, nor I don't care. His right name is Sachevarell."

"Sachevarell! The people who owned this house? I thought the family had died out."

"So did every one. Would I be serving Mr Corbett, good master as he is, if I thought there was a Sachevarell on earth? To think of that woman, Thrapston, not seeing it! You'll excuse a liberty, Miss, but if you will walk into the

picture-gallery and look at the picture of Mr Humphrey Sachevarell that was page to Queen Henrietta Maria, you'll see that this young gentleman is the image of him. Many a time I've shown the picture to visitors, yet never thought to see it come alive in him."

Anne looked down at the close-cropped head, which had a suggestion that love-locks had grown there if they had been permitted,—the delicately pencilled eyebrows, the slight moustache with its little twisted ends. The face was in a very terrible repose now, but she could imagine its sweetness and vivacity when the eyes were open. The lips even now had a smiling graciousness; but the face was over-lean, almost haggard, the slight figure showed itself in angles that were almost emaciation.

"It is probably a chance likeness," she said, thinking that to Mrs Mason's eyes a slight resemblance might count for too much, seeing that her thoughts were always with the Sachevarells. "The line is surely extinct."

"There was Mr Anthony Sachevarell, the squire's youngest brother, that went to foreign parts and never was heard from. The young man might be Mr Anthony's son."

"Poor Mrs Mason!" said Anne, with a tender compassion the old woman did not resent. "I believe you dream so much of Sachevarells that you read their likeness into a passing face. Why should the young man call himself Mr Vallance if he was Mr Anthony's son?"

"Far be it from me to say, Miss. I never

questioned the actions of my betters. The likeness is there sure enough."

After the doctor had come and had given orders that the patient was to be kept in perfect quietness, Mrs Mason's persistent belief recurred to Anne's mind, and she was curious enough to turn aside into the picture-gallery to look at the portrait of Humphrey Sachevarell. The likeness was there sure enough, although the young man's shabby clothes had little in common with the white satin and pearls of the dark-faced page to Henrietta Maria.

She stood a few minutes before the picture gazing at it. The likeness was there, a delicate subtle likeness not altogether on the surface, something of expression rather, likely enough to escape an ordinary observer. But to her it was quite apparent. How odd it would be if the young man upstairs were really a Sachevarell, and had been brought home to the house of his people to live or die!

To live or die; for days the issue was doubtful. For days Anne went about with a little pucker of anxiety in her forehead, and saw her care-stricken air reflected in a shadow that lay over Angela's beauty like a dim veil.

While the issue was in suspense she had no time to think upon Mrs Mason's obsession. Mrs Mason was always in and out of the sickroom, propitiating the trained nurses by her silence and the humility, which was a new thing in her. Once speaking to Anne of the young man she called him "Mr Humphrey."

Anne raised her eyebrows in a gently rallying way.

"Mr Humphrey," she repeated. "But if it is not Mr Humphrey after all? My poor Mason, what will you do then?"

"He would always be Mr Humphrey to me," the old woman answered obstinately. "Gentle folk may have their own reasons for keeping their names dark, but a Sachevarell couldn't hide himself from old Mason. I wish Mr Bradbury were alive now! Dear, dear, I'm twice the woman I was since I know there's one of the old family alive after all."

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW APPRENTICE.

THE Duchess was not one to let her perplexities worry her. For two or three days, a week perhaps, she was prevented from paying John Corbett a visit. Then one day her barouche, much too wide for the narrow by-streets of Elsdon, drew up at Armytage, Armytage and Corbett's doors. Again she was shown up to the junior partner's private room. She hardly waited for the formality indeed. Her foot was on the stair before the flurried young clerk had done telling her that Mr Corbett was in, and that he would announce her coming through the speaking tube.

She passed by half-a-dozen brilliant apartments, all filled with young men busily driving their quills, who left off with unanimity to look after the frou-frou of her skirts.

Sighing, she seated herself in Mr Corbett's comfortable room.

"If you're going to keep me coming and going like this over your family affairs, you'd better provide a lift," she said.

"I should if I knew it would bring you oftener," he answered her with affectionate raillery.

"The Duke used to say that I was so entirely without discretion that it was lucky I was a duchess. There were other reasons which the Duke was too polite or too fond of his wife to mention. All your young men out there behind their mahogany boxes are saying that you and I are going to make a match of it."

"They would not presume, Duchess."

"It's astonishing how far they will presume. However, it isn't my love affairs or yours that have brought out Miller when he has the lumbago in his head, and the bays when one of them is coughing. It's Angela's. What is there between her and young Armytage?"

"Why should you suppose there is anything?"

He looked at her with a whimsical air of tantalising her. Then, before she could remonstrate he flung out both his hands. He was standing in the favourite hearthrug position or the male person.

"There," he said, "I won't quibble about it, although I believe it was myself that said it should be a secret. Willie Armytage has asked my consent to an engagement between himself and Angela."

"And you sent him packing?"

"I could hardly do that. There is nothing against him. I bid him talk about it when he had been called to the Bar."

The Duchess uttered a sigh of relief.

"Ah, that is better than nothing, though I wish you had been firmer about it. I wish he had asked me. Of course I know what you would say, why should he ask me? Because"—she looked defiantly at John Corbett—"because I have other plans for Angela."

"You are a woman of discretion, despite the Duke's judgment," said John Corbett, "so I don't mind telling you a thing that has puzzled me, and that is that when the lad asked me I felt that *I* had other plans for Angela. I have none except to keep her with me, as long as I may. She is the dearest of my children. But, I certainly did not want to give her to Willie, although I am nearly as fond of the lad as I am of Jack or Arthur. And there is absolutely nothing against him."

"I begin to have hopes of you—— Why? No, you needn't ask me why. And that reminds me that I have a favour to ask of you. Alured, the present Duke, has you know a large family of sons and daughters. I happen to be particularly interested in one, only one. I wash my hands of the others. If people will have big families let them provide for them. Alured has the title. But this one, Godfrey,—he resembles my boy. I have wanted him for some time to come and look after my loneliness. He ought to see to the land and the Castle, and look after rents and all that. But he says he is not cut out for the pursuits of a country gentleman. He's mad on mechanics. I don't know what possesses young people nowadays.

He will come to me if—— Will you take him as an apprentice to Armytage, Armytage and Corbett?"

"Your nephew, Lord Godfrey? The Duke's son! He would be only playing at work."

"Try him. From the time he could walk alone he has been playing with cog-wheels and pulleys and sections and such things. Eton hasn't cured him. I give you my word that up to the time he was eighteen I never saw Godfrey that his hands weren't grimed with oil and lamp-black, or something that looked like lamp-black. I'm rather disgusted. I wanted Godfrey to manage things for me. Alured obligingly offers me Compton, the second son. I can't bear Compton. He is his mother in trousers. If Godfrey will be an engineer, let him begin to be one with you. He could live with me then."

The talk had wandered from Angela. John Corbett saw no connection between the subject of her engagement and Lord Godfrey Ingestre's taste for engineering.

"If he is really in earnest, Duchess," he said, "we shall receive him into our works with pleasure. I hope it won't demoralise the others to have a duke's son in the workshop. We have apprentices from all classes and conditions of men, and many countries. We haven't taken them yet from the higher ranks of the aristocracy."

"You'd never know it by Godfrey," said the Duchess eagerly. "He has the most shocking ideas really. Thinks one man is as good as

another: and I'm sure he would drop his title if he could. I don't know where the lad got bitten with his notions. They annoy Grace, his mother, dreadfully. I don't like Grace, and I have never forgiven her for making me a dowager. I remember Godfrey at thirteen, when a party of them were saying what they would be if they could choose. They would all be famous soldiers or sailors or statesmen or explorers or cricketers. Godfrey would be an engine-driver and drive only express trains. I believe he has not changed from that day."

Mr Corbett laughed.

"We must try to conduct his energy into the proper channels," he said. "When do you expect him?"

"When I write for him. We've had a tiff because he wouldn't take up the management of the property, which will be his one day, but would gang his ain gait. He said shorthorns weren't in it for interest with cog-wheels. Did you ever hear of such a misguided youth? I said I'd leave everything to Compton, and he answered that it would be a very good thing to do since Compton would never be able to earn thirty shillings a week for himself. He was quite good-tempered about it, and really meant what he said. So we haven't been speaking. I was hurt at his readiness to make way for Compton. And I've been very angry with him: but a thought came to me the other day of how nice it would be to give in to Godfrey, and to do just the thing he wanted. It was

surprising how the fascination of the idea grew."

A delightful smile lit up her rather heavy features.

"You see, I'm a true woman," she went on. "And I love the boy the more because he wouldn't give in to me. I feel he'd have held out for ever; and so I quite enjoy giving in."

"You are a very generous woman."

"I have an unbounded capacity for giving in to men. I like them to hold their own even from the cradle. Girls ought to be gentle and docile. I like a turbulent boy baby I shall spoil Godfrey's sons horribly one of these days."

For an instant a shadow fell over her face, and she lifted her hand and held it between her and the light.

"Godfrey will come as soon as he knows he has conquered," she went on after that almost imperceptible pause. "I shall like to see him and Anne Daly together. Godfrey will air all his socialistic theories, and flout all Anne's ideas about the divine rights of aristocracy. How they will quarrel!"

"If he does not fall in love with her."

The Duchess frowned.

"Godfrey won't do that. It is a most unlikely thing to happen. Why, he is only twenty-two. Anne is ---- Never mind what age she is. She is older than Godfrey."

"As though that mattered. My two lads are head over ears in love with her. Indeed I may

say my three, though in Cyril the passion takes a different shape."

"Godfrey will have more sense," the Duchess said in a petulant way which made John Corbett smile. The mixture of feminine and masculine qualities in his old friend always delighted him.

"Very well, he won't then," he said. "But all the same, as a father of sons, I should have required a less fascinating person at the head of my table if I had but known. And by the way, Miss Daly has made a conquest. She can be mistress of a house in Park Lane, a country house in Norfolk, a hunting-box in Leicestershire, a grouse-moor in Scotland, a yacht at Cowes, and a house-boat on the river, if she will; or at least things are tending that way."

The Duchess's eyes sparkled.

"And who is the man?" she asked breathlessly.

"She won't look at him. It is Olivarez—you know his name."

"*That Olivarez! The Olivarez!*"

"Ah! I see you know. Have you ever seen him? No! He's not a bad fellow really, although his looks are against him. He has asked me to ask him down again, telling me openly that he was fascinated by Miss Daly. 'What a background for diamonds!' he said. Those were his exact words."

"You are quite right. She won't look at him. But what a chance missed for some other poor girl! There's Sophie, Godfrey's sister. Sophie would jump at him. Oh waste-

ful Anne! What do *you* think of her? You have never told me."

"She is magnificent. The old mother has taken a great fancy to her. I can always trust the old mother's judgments. And the children are her slaves, even Hetty, though Hetty held out at first."

"Anne is really very simple. I used to think of her as a great, beautiful child going about with the little wicked old grandmother. Yes, she was wicked, quite saturated with the spirit of the world although *dévoté*. All simple creatures are sure to like Anne."

"I know what you mean," said John Corbett. "I have seen her look surprised. And her dimples. It struck me as an amazing thing that anything so majestic as Miss Daly should have dimples. But she really has them, Duchess. And she can stare. She stared at Olivarez when he forced her to. She stares at Mrs Perkins. It is quite a nice stare and doesn't make the people uncomfortable, but it is a stare all the same, frank and wondering like a child's."

It was only when she was on her homeward way that this new habit of observation in John Corbett presented itself to the Duchess as a matter of interest.

"If there were not the disappearing cousin," she said, and then turned away from the elusive thought to consider her own plans for Angela and the letter she must write to Godfrey as soon as she returned home.

CHAPTER X

ANNE MAKES ANOTHER FRIEND.

MRS PERKINS was frankly, simply vulgar, but in this county of Smoke-shire, where the line was drawn so sharply between the classes, Mrs Perkins yet went everywhere.

At first sight of Mrs Perkins, Anne had indeed stared as John Corbett had reported. Mrs Perkins was a short woman of a prodigious stoutness. She had a tallowy complexion, shiny black hair which looked as though it had been oiled, a turned-up nose, and small shrewd eyes.

The first time Anne met her was at dinner at the Duchess's. She was wearing a red silk dress, which not even the old lace that trimmed it could redeem from being as vulgar as its wearer. She had a magnificent diamond-and-ruby necklace about her neck, and a tiara on her squat ignoble head. Her hands, short and stubby, were covered with rings.

If Anne stared, Mrs Perkins repaid her with interest. Mrs Perkins even neglected her turtle soup to stare at Anne long after Anne had discovered that *she* was staring and had given it up. Afterwards in the drawing-room where Mrs

Perkins was hemmed in by a group of the most exclusive ladies of the county, the Duchess drew Anne with her into an alcove, where a light burned perpetually before a Madonna of Perugino.

"You've fascinated Mrs Perkins," she said under cover of the chatter at the other end of the long drawing-room. "She'll be asking you to dinner the next thing, and then your social future will be made in Smokeshire."

Anne looked at her with a distressed air.

"It is a jest, is it not, Duchess?" she said. "Why do you receive Mrs Perkins on terms of equality? Of course she can't help her looks. One wouldn't think twice of them if she were a working-woman."

"She is a working-woman," the Duchess interjected. "If you will only listen to her she will tell you she was happier when she was over the wash-tub than she has ever been in Culvers, which is the finest house in the county and a perfect palace of the arts."

Anne's face cleared a little.

"Do you suppose she is talking to Lady Hilda and Mrs Maberly about the wash-tub?" she asked.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised. They look so interested."

"Ah! that is better. If she isn't pretentious she is better than I thought."

"You are always happier, Anne, aren't you, when you can think well of your fellow-creatures?"

"Aren't you? Isn't every one?"

"No, most excellent Anne, I'm not. It makes a great part of human happiness to think of our fellow-creatures as worse than they really are. What would become of all the tea-tables in Great Britain else?"

Anne smiled in a relieved way.

"I know it is a joke now, Duchess, for no one has a kinder heart than yourself."

"How I must have deceived you, my poor Anne! But never mind. As soon as those women have given her up you must come and talk to Mrs Perkins. Fie, Anne! What a face! Mrs Perkins can no more help looking as she does than you can help looking as you do. She's really a good sort. And she has had trouble, poor soul. Her only son went to the dogs. He married at the last some maid-servant or other whom he'd picked up in the slums. It wasn't the worst thing he did. Mrs Perkins pays her to keep at a distance. It must be melancholy enough to have all that money and nothing to do with it: and to feel that she's accepted among people who would hardly have her in their kitchens only for her money and what she gives them. She is as lavish as a queen. I think we all hope that we may fall in for a slice of the money. It will be so absolutely going a-begging once there is no Mrs Perkins."

"Poor woman!" said Anne, and her pity was sweet as a child's. "One can feel very sorry for Mrs Perkins. But the people who go after her money—ah!"

The contempt in her voice was withering.

"Easy, Anne, easy! I'm one of them."

"Ah, not you, dear friend, not you!"

The Duchess laughed.

"Very well, then, Anne, I'll confess that I've no designs on Mother Perkins' money. But it is quite true that I do what others do and receive her on an apparent equality because she is immensely rich. You can't imagine how rich, Anne. Fabulous! And all made out of bone manure. Can't you understand, Anne, the fascination of fabulous riches? There is really something romantic about it. It is like the way we used to feel as children for the trees of the Arabian Nights that grew rubies great as apples. It is why the whole world loves a treasure-story."

Anne shook her head unbelievably.

"Poverty seems so much more beautiful to me," she said. "Poverty as I know it."

"You are the little sister of the Lady Poverty, Anne. I give up trying to make you a worldling. But tell me, what will you do when Mrs Perkins asks you to dinner? I can see her eyes on you even now. She'll give you strawberries at a guinea a basket, and truffles and ortolans, and the table will be decked with orchids precious as jewels. And the wine!"

Anne turned away and looked up at the Perugino Madonna.

"I wouldn't dine with Mrs Perkins, who is accepted everywhere because of her money," she said. "But I will dine with the poor woman, who has had so much sorrow, if she asks me."

"You are absolutely unique, Anne," said the Duchess, and then leant to kiss her.

"But now tell me," she went on in a different voice. "How is your sick young man, and when are you going to get rid of him?"

"Oh, getting rid of him is out of the question for a long time."

Anne's voice was quite joyous now.

"But he is doing as well as Dr Pottinger could hope."

"I think Angela has taken the accident to heart."

"We all have. She feels it more because she was in the carriage when the accident occurred. None of us could breathe till he was out of danger."

"Poor little Angela! Kind child! I see a change in her, Anne. Her eyes are like saucers, and her fairness has become too white. I wonder what Mr Willie Armytage thinks of it."

"It is only the anxiety I found out that she used to leave her bed at night when things were at the worst and steal downstairs to listen at the door. She knew if all were quiet inside that nothing untoward was happening."

The Duchess looked at Anne with an expression of grim enjoyment.

"It will be a pretty kettle of fish," she said, "if Angela, being half-engaged to this young Armytage,—a very respectable and satisfactory young man, I hear,—should go and imagine herself in love with a wandering sign-painter."

"How fast you go!" said Anne. "Because Angela takes an interest——"

"That is precisely it. It is Angela's first experience, else she would not have let young Armytage persuade her to this demi-semi-engagement."

"Of course if she is engaged to Willie Armytage her heart is in it," said Anne seriously. "Her kindness for Mr Vallance is only a natural interest such as any generous creature would take in this poor young man in the circumstances."

"Humph!" said the Duchess unbelievably.

Perhaps the monosyllable recalled a complete name to Anne's mind. Anyhow she suddenly thought of Mrs Mason's strange idea with regard to the artist.

"He is not a wandering sign-post painter," she said. "He had his sketch-book with him when he was hurt, and the sketches are very vigorous and spirited. And Arthur has been to the Inn and tells me his room is full of pictures. By the way, Mrs Mason will have it that he is a Sachevarell."

"What!"

"She says that he is a Sachevarell. She is very obstinate about it. I don't think she has anything to go upon except a general likeness to the family, a more particular one to a portrait in the picture-gallery, that of Humphrey Sachevarell. She calls him Mr Humphrey because of it."

"Mason is growing very old. She must suffer from delusions. You will have to get some one in her place. John Corbett will pension her and give her one of the lodges. If she is so old as

all that it is time she was shunted. She may poison you all some day."

"Indeed, Duchess," said Anne, her fine nostrils quivering, "you are quite wrong about Mason. She is perfectly competent to fill her position still, and I don't know what I should do without her. Of course, as she says, she can't feel for the present family what she did for the old; still, she will serve Mr Corbett faithfully to the end."

"I've no doubt she will," said the Duchess indignantly. "I'll tell you what, my dear, I wouldn't have other people's old servants about me for anything. I should feel that they were always looking down on me. John Corbett spoils them abominably. This woman, worst of all. An ungrateful baggage!"

"Not that!" said Anne with sudden emotion. "Faithfulness is rare enough. Let us treasure it where we find it. My Uncle Terry, the one who spent all the money of the family, had a houseful of old servants. They had been with his grandfather. He was always wanting to pension them off but they never would go. At last Lanty, who was nearly ninety, but would still drive Uncle Terry, overturned the carriage in a ditch. Only it was full of snow Uncle Terry would have been killed. It was a week after the butler, Thady MacOwen, had nearly poisoned him by accidentally decanting the spirits he kept for cleaning the silver into his wine. After that Uncle Terry thought it was time to do something, and he got the gout so badly that he was ordered

not to drink wine. Dr Cullinan had got the tip, and he was absolutely forbidden carriage exercise as well. He used to have to dine with his friends to get a glass of claret, and one or other of the neighbours would give him a lift when they met him to take the weight off his legs. Uncle Terry said the old servants would have been the death of him if a very cold winter hadn't carried off Lanty, and Thady hadn't had a stroke soon afterwards. Even then Thady wouldn't give up. I remember him a little wizened monkey-figure of a man sitting in the butler's pantry ordering the new man about. I believe he outlived Uncle Terry. Uncle Terry valued their affection even when it had its inconveniences."

"Oh!" said the Duchess. "My servants, I am glad to say, never go to such extremes. I don't know how many butlers I've set up as public-house keepers, and coachmen as livery-stable-men."

"Of course even in Ireland servants are not what they were," said Anne thoughtfully.

"I wonder you ever grew up," said the Duchess. "However, my dear Anne, I hope you told Mason she was a fool. There can be no likeness, or if there is there can be nothing in it. Let me see. Angel was the last of the Sachevarells. Her father had but one brother. He disappeared. I've heard an odd story about that. The Duke always said that Angel's mother was in love with Anthony. Anthony and Marmaduke were devoted to each other. Anthony was always a rover. He came home from some of his

wanderings to find his brother engaged to Angela Ffolliott, the loveliest girl of her day. The Duke said that Anthony's infatuation for her and hers for Anthony began as soon as they set eyes on each other. Marmaduke never knew it. Anthony went off on one of his roving expeditions and was never heard of again. It couldn't be that Anthony married and had a son?"

"Why not?"

"Why not, indeed?" The Duchess looked at Anne with eyes of speculation. "But if he had it would be no use the youth's returning. There is nothing for him here. Minster was not entailed, and poor Marmaduke made ducks and drakes of everything. It would be no case of the long-lost heir."

"He seems very poor."

"It is some folly of Mason's," said the Duchess resolutely. "I should like to tell the woman that she is a thousand times better off under John Corbett than under the Sachevarells, though I loved the Sachevarells. Poor Marmaduke owed them all their wages when he died. John Corbett when he took them over took the arrears as well."

"They wouldn't mind that in Ireland," said Anne. "My Uncle Terry never paid his servants."

"Perhaps that explains it," said the Duchess. "I mean their constancy, my dear," she added hastily, "for I'm sure they're not constant here though they insist on being paid regularly. It is some folly of Mason's."

"I think not. Mason is quite a silent person, you know, and I don't think she would have told me only that she seemed to be rather overcome by the resemblance, and spoke out while she was agitated about it. Angela has not spoken of it to me."

"Then I would hold my tongue, and make Mason hold hers. I don't want Angela to marry Willie Armytage. Anne, I am going to take you into my confidence. I have other ideas for Angela. There is my husband's nephew, Godfrey, the son of the present Duke. He is the seventh son of a seventh son, and ought to be by rights a doctor. But he is mad about engines. I am going to have him to live with me, and he is to learn the engineering from Armytage, Armytage and Corbett. Godfrey will have my savings. He will be well enough off, and could afford to marry a poor girl. He shall marry Angela."

"But what, what about Willie Armytage?" asked Anne with a gasp.

"My dear Anne, I thought we had arranged that Willie Armytage was to marry Hetty. I thought we'd settled that the child liked him. I don't mind his having Hetty."

"Ah, but he has chosen Angela. And she apparently has chosen him. I don't think we are called upon to interfere. It isn't kind nor honourable to plot against poor Willie."

For a second the Duchess looked vexed. Then she laughed.

"I made a mistake in selecting a fellow-con-

spirator," she said. "Well, never mind. Matters can adjust themselves. Godfrey is not one to be married off either. We are all too meddlesome, aren't we, Anne? except you. I want Godfrey's children to give me back something of the childhood of my boy. I have been lonely now, Anne, for twenty-five years."

Anne caught at her hand.

"Come now," the Duchess said, turning away her head, "I'm the worst of hostesses. Come and talk to Mrs Perkins. She is a poor mother, too, Anne. I see she has broken away from Lady Hilda and is positively coming towards us."

Presently Anne found herself talking to Mrs Perkins, and quite forgetting the vulgarity of her looks and the plainness of her speech in the shrewd, homely, simple conversation. She was not so unlike an old peasant, after all, and in her lack of pretension was just as little vulgar.

"*She* will be the next person to receive a diamond bracelet," said Lady Hilda to Mrs Maberly, and there was a note of indignation in her voice.

"And I shall drive over to see you," said Mrs Perkins. "Let me see, on Tuesday afternoon, if you will be at home and quiet?"

"I shall be quite alone, I think," said Anne. "At least for a time. I know Miss Corbett has an engagement, and the others are going to a concert in Elsdon with their old governess, Miss May. I shall look forward very much to seeing you."

And Anne meant it. Only the Duchess smiled to herself, hearing the speech and the royal way in which it was uttered. And poor Mrs Perkins looked pleased. Perhaps there was an unexpected fount of humility in Mrs Perkins.

CHAPTER XL

OF ANGELS.

AFTER all, Mr Corbett's hand was forced in the matter of Willie Armytage and Angela, and it was the oldest of his friends who forced it. Josiah Armytage was the patriarch of the family. He had been senior partner in Armytages when John Corbett had come in, an eager-faced boy in working clothes, to learn the secrets of a business which he was to lift unbelievably high.

John Corbett had a grateful heart. He had never forgotten the Quaker's kindly hand upon his head, the words of encouragement which the senior partner had not been too proud to address to the youngest apprentice, who was there only by the philanthropy of that erratic person, Squire Sachevarell. He came to love the old man with the mild peaceful blue eyes and white hair, as though he had been his son, and the love was fully returned.

"Johnny, my lad," said old Mr Armytage, after an evening when Mr Corbett had dined with him. He was "Johnny" to his old chief, as he had been to his mother, and to no one else. "Mrs Reuben tells me that there is an

attachment between thy Angela and her Willie. Is that so?"

Mr Corbett looked slightly vexed, and wished Mrs Reuben Armytage had kept the secret a little longer, but he said as cheerfully as possible that Willie had spoken to him, and that he believed Angela was willing. He himself only desired the matter to be postponed till the couple were a little older.

"I married Willie's grandmother when I was but nineteen and she sixteen. We never fell out of love with each other," said the old man, beaming, "and I pray we may die in one hour. Let the children be happy, Johnny. I want to hold my great-grandson in my arms before I die."

He would listen to none of the father's prudence. What was the matter with Willie, a steady, clever, high-principled boy? He had no wild oats to sow: his character was as formed now as it would be in ten years' time. He would make Angela happy. The old man wanted to provide in his will for Angela's children. He was eighty-four. "I can't count upon many more years of life, Johnny," he said.

John Corbett could not refuse his old friend. The engagement was made public, and Angela wore a posy ring upon her finger, a pretty thing which Willie, who was a person of taste, had picked up somewhere, a thing of not much intrinsic value, with its posy neatly tucked away under a heart formed of a pink topaz with a true-lover's knot of diamonds tied above it. And Angela was apparently satisfied.

Oddly enough a friendship had sprung up between Anne and old Mr Armytage. There was something eminently pleasing to Anne's austere taste in the modest house where the possessor of great wealth sat smiling across the airy bare room at his old wife whose eyes had the gray lavender of her cap-strings. Old Mr Armytage's house was on a hill, and although Elsdon fumed in the valley below none of its soot or darkness ever seemed to reach those high bare rooms, where Anne fancifully thought that even the sunbeams showed no motes.

"You remind me," said Anne in her outspoken way, "of a dear friend of mine at home, Mr Armytage. He is a Roman Catholic priest, the Abbé O'Rourke. He is domestic chaplain to my grandmother, Madam Daly. Whenever you look at me I think of his eyes."

"We are both old enough to have found peace, doubtless," said Josiah. "I respect your priests very much, Miss Daly, for the sake of that excellent man, Father Theobald Mathew. I had the honour to receive him in this house when he visited Elsdon,—let me see, nearly sixty years ago. I was one of the first to take the pledge from his hands, although I had never tasted intoxicating drink in my life, but for the sake of example, for the sake of example."

"Ah, the Abbé likes a glass of good wine," said Anne, "although I have known him go without in order that the sick should have it."

"I have often meant to visit thy land," went on the old man. "Many of our Society visited

it in the famine long ago, as perhaps thee may have heard. Perhaps we shall go even yet, my old wife and I."

"Listen to him," chuckled the old lady in great delight. "Thee forgets thy age, father."

"'Tis because thee will look so young," said the old man with tender gallantry.

"I am glad," said Anne to the Duchess, "that Angela is marrying into the Reuben Armytages, not into the James Armytages. Mrs James is bent on making the money fly. She is trying to make her daughters forget that they are Quakeresses, not knowing that it is their one distinction here where it is so common to be rich. I don't think Angela will ever learn to look at life with Mrs James's eyes."

"Mrs James's sisters-in-law used to wear gray poke bonnets, and gray cloaks to their feet. Her Miriam and Rachel have the very eyes of their aunts, though she will have their gowns from Jay's."

"I know," said Anne, nodding her head. "They look out of their fine clothes as a dove might out of a peacock's feathers. Perhaps when they can choose their own way they will go back to the simplicity of their people."

"You should have looked after Angela better. I didn't want her to be a Mrs Armytage at all. I thought I could have trusted you, Anne, to disgust her with the prospect."

"You see they were old friends," said Anne pleadingly. "I think I could have made her accept any point of view because she is fond

of me, dear child, but that does not include disgusting people with their old friends, even if they are rich, unquiet ladies like Mrs James. But Mrs Reuben is beautiful. I love Mrs Reuben."

"That reminds me," said the Duchess. "What have you been doing with the interesting young man whom Angela and her father picked up on the roadside?"

"Ah!" Anne's face brightened. "He is really recovering. Bye-and-bye he is to paint the chapel ceiling. Mr Corbett has been so kind to him."

"And meanwhile?"

"Meanwhile he lies on the sofa in the blue room. It is pleasant there now that the spring has come and he can see patches of snowdrops under the trees in the shrubbery. He reads many books, and sometimes he plays on his violin, and we all visit him through the day. He creates a little interest in the house."

"I expect you are making a spoilt child of him. That is all very well while he is recovering from his broken head. But afterwards?"

"Afterwards? There will be the chapel to paint. It will take a long time. Do you know that Mr Corbett has commissioned him to paint it with angels in all the panels? Above the altar a triptych of the Annunciation, the Stable at Bethlehem, the House of Nazareth. Everywhere else, angels."

"I had not heard. What put the angels into his head?"

"Perhaps the story you told me," said Anne with a light in her eyes. "The young man is deep in volumes of prints after the old Masters. I found him asleep the other day. A book of Fra Angelico prints was lying open beside him. He is absorbed in ideas about the painting. He has been much in Italy, and seems to have pretty well absorbed Angelico and his school."

"I hope he will stick to Angelico," said the Duchess a little grimly. "And pray, when am I to make this interesting young man's acquaintance? The last time I saw him he was quite incapable of getting up and making me a bow."

"Why, you shall see him to-day, now, if you like. Perhaps when you know him you will drop that mocking way you have of speaking about him, which is so unlike you, Duchess."

"Ah, you see I haven't nursed him back to health. If I had I should, no doubt, have a *tendresse* for him. Well, you can take me to-day, if you will."

A bright fire burned in the grate of the blue room: but since the February morning blew like summer one long window that opened on the verandah was set wide open.

The voice that bade them come in—was not that of the inmate of the room. It was Angela's voice, and it was preoccupied. She was standing a little in front of the artist's chair as they entered. He had a palette in his hand, and he was walking slowly backward

from the easel. The February wind had lifted the soft cloudy masses of Angela's hair. Her young profile against the blue curtain was strangely delicate and transparent. Her gray eyes were shy and full of light.

Some one else came to meet them, little Ursula. What Angela was to-day Ursula would be in a few years' time.

"Don't speak," she said in an ecstatic whisper to the two ladies. "There is something in Angela's face he wants to catch."

But the spell had been broken. The young man turned round with a quick apology. The unearthly light under Angela's large eyelids shifted, vanished.

"Mr Vallance, allow me to present you to the Duchess of St Kilda," said Anne.

Angela picked up the little bit of embroidery she had dropped. Ursula sat down on the white woolly hearthrug, and lay all along it, with an arm round her dog's neck in an attitude of angular, childish gracefulness. Life, which had seemed to hold its breath in the room as they came in, resumed its wonted course.

"I'm afraid we have disturbed a sitting," said the Duchess, her shrewd eyes studying the artist's face.

The young man took the little picture off the easel, and handed it for her inspection frankly.

"It is not the aspect in which most people have seen Miss Corbett," she said drily, after inspecting the picture for a moment. "But of course you have given her an aureole."

"True: aureoles are not worn in everyday life," he replied, smiling from his soft Southern eyes.

"Perhaps they are not articles which belong to many wardrobes."

"To more than we think, perhaps," he answered. "Many women have them, I think; most mothers."

The Duchess's eyes grew kind.

"Have you many more of these pretty things?" she asked, indicating the little picture.

"It was my first trial in oils. I have many sketches, if your Grace would be pleased to look through them. They are slight things, mere suggestions for the greater part. You know I begin work at Easter."

He settled the Duchess with a footstool, and a little table beside her, with quick, bright courtesy. Then he did as much for Anne. Presently Angela took her strip of embroidery and went away, and Ursula, saying something about taking the dogs for a walk, went after her.

The Duchess turned over the sketches. It could not be said that Angela figured more in them than Ursula. Sometimes an ear, the outline of a cheek, a young arm slender in a hanging sleeve, the line of an eyelid, spoke of Angela. But here was Anne too; at least Anne's profile, the something like a valiant and unworldly boy which was her expression; but the head was the head of a very masculine angel: the curls above the massive neck had nothing to do with Anne's heavily-braided head

upon its slender neck. Here again were the golden, floss-fine locks of a small Armytage; here were Miriam Armytage's quiet eyes.

The Duchess had turned over the sketches without saying much. When she had finished she smiled into the eager face.

"You have persuaded me that there are angels in many of us," she said, "and that is a good thing to have done. Supposing, when you have done this work for Mr Corbett,—you will take years to do it?"

"I shall take months certainly."

"Supposing that you undertake a somewhat similar work for me. I want the walls of a children's hospital painted with pictures in memory of some one who is dead. I should like you to do it for me. The sick mites ought to have pretty things to look at."

"Your Grace is too good."

"I've capitulated to him," said the Duchess later to Anne. "At the same time I don't know what John Corbett is about, and what you are about, and what Angela is about, and what that extremely foolish young man, Mr Willie Armytage, is about. Tell me, now, does that old woman, Mason, still stick to her hallucination concerning this Mr Hilary Vallance?"

"She does not talk about it. Do you know, I believe she thinks, with the obstinacy of her class, that if Mr Vallance,—Master Humphrey, as she calls him,—were to put in his claim he could dispossess the Corbetts, bundle them out root and branch. She's attached to

the Corbetts, though of course they are nothing to the Sachevarells. I don't think she'd like to see them on the roadside. So she is troubled, dragged both ways, and holds her peace."

"He is no more Sachevarell than I am," said the Duchess obstinately. "But I'll tell you what, Anne, you are all mad together. I don't know what Godfrey will think of you all. You know he comes to me next Wednesday. And I wonder what you will think of Godfrey."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOTHER.

MRS PERKINS and Anne had become excellent friends.

When Mrs Perkins had come to see Anne that Tuesday, Anne had proved to be rash in saying that she would be alone. Old Mrs Corbett was pretty sure to be in her seat by the drawing-room fire. When Anne first came and the fine folk of the county began to visit the Duchess of St Kilda's dearest friend, the old woman had gone away quietly and humbly to the luxurious suite of rooms her son had provided for her. But of late she had begun to keep Anne company if Anne happened to be in.

She was silent as ever, but would nod and smile at Anne as she came and went, and seemed so much brighter for Anne's society that her son noticed it and commented on it gratefully.

"You have the four-leaved shamrock," he said. "Isn't that the right wand for a wonder-worker to possess? I have sometimes wondered if I was right to take her away from the cottage where she had lived her happy days. No

matter what I could do—and the children are very fond of her—she has seemed so lonely. I could only hope she was not unhappy.”

“She was not unhappy. I don’t think you need fear about that. I think when she sat there with the stocking growing longer between her fingers she was just waiting quietly, like one who has said her *Nunc Dimittis*.”

“She talks to you.”

“Oh yes, she talks to me. She tells me things about you when you were a child. It is beautiful how she thinks of you. And I am very proud that she honours me with her friendship.”

“Forgive me, Miss Daly: I was frightened when you were coming lest you should alarm her.”

“Alarm her!” Anne’s face was as wondering as a child’s. “Am I very alarming?”

“I could imagine that you would be very alarming in certain circumstances. Worse than the archangel with the sword the lad painted yesterday.”

But this was later.

As it happened, the day Mrs Perkins made her first call Anne was detained listening to Dr Pottinger’s hopes and fears concerning his patient. When she reached the drawing-room at last she found that Mrs Perkins was being entertained by old Mrs Corbett. On the point of entering the room her footsteps were arrested by the incessant flow of talk. After the pause she went in quietly. She got a good view of the two old women, unseen by them. The faces were alive with interest. They might have been painted as peasants talking.

strong baby. He was the only one I ever had, and all the love I had to give went into him. Sometimes I've thought I spoilt him, my dear. You see I hadn't been used to money. When it began rolling in first I didn't know what to make of it, and couldn't believe it came through all the smelly things John used to mess with in his little workshop of a night. And it came in such heaps and heaps. And the child being born late when I'd given up expecting. And his father being taken from us, and no control of him as a boy. Then when he wouldn't go to school I was that fond of him I couldn't go against him. Oh dear, oh dear, I'm afraid I made an idol of him and God punished me."

"So far as that goes," said Anne, "I think most women make idols of their children; and God doesn't punish them. Perhaps He means the children to be made idols of. Of course it was a pity you didn't make him go to school. But perhaps that had nothing at all to do with it. He had great temptations, being the possessor of so much wealth. Wealth must be a great trial, Mrs Perkins."

Mrs Perkins looked at her open-mouthed. It was the first time the point of view had been presented to her. But after a moment she said humbly: "Perhaps you are right, my dear. People make idols of that; but after all it doesn't bring happiness or peace of mind, as none knows better than myself."

"I'm always sorry for the poor rich people," said Anne, with a sincerity there was no doubting.

Mrs Perkins looked at her again with a certain cunning in her small eyes.

"It's surprising what people will do to get it," she said. "And people you wouldn't think would stoop. Now there's Olivarez; you know Olivarez, my dear?"

Anne shook her head.

"You don't? You must have forgotten him. But he hasn't forgotten you. He saw you at dinner one night. He thought you would set off somebody's diamonds better than any woman he'd ever met."

Anne's eyes flashed.

"I remember now," she said. "What a vulgar thought!"

Again the humility so few people knew showed itself in Mrs Perkins.

"Is it vulgar, my dear?" she asked. "I shouldn't have thought it. I am sure poor Olivarez didn't mean it vulgar. Why, there's hardly a pretty girl I know who wouldn't marry Olivarez if he asked them, for all that he isn't over-particular in some ways and wasn't brought up to his money any more than myself."

Anne waived away the subject of Mr Olivarez as though it could not possibly have the remotest interest for her.

"We won't talk about him," she said. "I do remember him. But tell me, dear Mrs Perkins. We were talking of something so much more interesting. Did you ever see your son's wife?"

"Not I." Mrs Perkins' face became purple

with indignation. "A little common hussy, to take advantage of my son when he wasn't in a state to know what he was doing! I wish I could have had her punished by law for it."

"Perhaps she liked him," said Anne wistfully. "Why should she not? She may not have known that he was rich."

"I told my lawyer to allow her a sum that would enable her to live respectable. I couldn't have my George's wife disgrace his name, or else I'd have let her be. She calls for the allowance quarterly. That is all I know of her. Indeed, now you mention it, Mr Drake, of Drake, Hollis & Burr—it's a well-known old firm, my dear—did want me to see her. I couldn't do it—a common Irish girl."

"Irish!"

"My dear, I beg your pardon," said Mrs Perkins in a painful flutter of repentance. "I hope you will forgive me. I wouldn't have let it escape me, not for anything you could give me, if I'd remembered."

"Never mind," said Anne, "if she is not good her being Irish doesn't alter the fact. I wish you could see her, Mrs Perkins, all the same."

"I couldn't bring myself to do it, my dear. You see I took it that she—took him in like."

"If you were so fond of him why should you doubt some one else loving him for his own sake?"

"I never thought of that," said Mrs Perkins, in a wondering voice. Her face looked as though she had been given pause. "If so be it was

that she didn't take him for his money it would be different. But, my dear, it was a blow. With all that great fortune waiting for him; and he might pick and choose among ladies of title. He might, indeed, my dear."

"I wouldn't value that unless they liked him for himself."

"And why wouldn't they?" asked the mother. "My Georgie might well have been liked for himself."

"Then you should have given the poor thing he married the benefit of the doubt," said Anne, with the most tender smile.

"I'm surprised at you, I really am, Miss Daly," said Mrs Perkins. "You look so proud. When I saw you walk across the room that first evening, before ever I saw your face I saw the pride in your back, in your shoulders, my dear, and wondered who you could be. You know you've a very proud back. You won't mind my saying so?"

"It isn't that kind of pride," said Anne seriously. "I think if she were a poor little girl who married him for love, perhaps not knowing that he was rich—you said yourself that he was in miserable surroundings—I'd receive her far more gladly than I would a titled lady who might have—might have, you understand, married him for his money."

"It's beyond me," said Mrs Perkins helplessly. "I can only think of the disappointment. It broke my heart, it did indeed, my dear. You wouldn't think it to look at me, but I am really

a broken-hearted woman. I should like to say for the girl that Mr Drake did say that she wasn't greedy about the money. Drake was prepared to allow her much more. She thought a hundred a year quite sufficient."

Anne got up and kissed Mrs Perkins of her own accord.

"I think I'd see her if I were you," she said.

"I'll think about it," Mrs Perkins said in the same bewildered way. "Perhaps I've too much common-sense, and perhaps you've something better. But a little servant out of a Hoxton lodging-house as my Georgie's widow! It would be easier, you see, dear, if I hadn't all the money and the great house and all the servants, and the fine friends who don't mind my queer, common ways because I'm the rich Mrs Perkins. Of course they laugh at me behind my back. Still, still, if she was a decent girl and loved my Georgie I could get over all that. You're the proudest of them all and you advise me to it. You never think of me as the rich Mrs Perkins at all, dear, do you now?"

Anne's face was beautiful as she looked at her.

"No, dear Mrs Perkins," she said, "only as the poor Mrs Perkins, the poor, poor woman who had a son and lost him."

CHAPTER XIII.

A SOCIALIST.

COMING in one day from a drive in the east wind which had brought the roses to her cheeks and ruffled her soft hair, Anne was informed that the Duchess and Lord Godfrey Ingestre had just come and were awaiting her in the drawing-room.

She hurried in as she was, in the long violet coat and wide violet velvet hat which Madam had somehow managed to send her at Christmas to replace the ugly one which had set Madam's teeth on edge, to find the Duchess looking as proud and important as possible over the young man in ugly gray flannels whom she introduced as her nephew.

"You must forgive him, my dear Anne," she said, looking at him delightedly. "He wouldn't put on the regulation top-hat and frock-coat to pay a visit. He's a sort of working-man, you know."

"Haven't got such things," said Lord Godfrey in a hoarse young voice, which had a suggestion of habitually shouting above the wind. "I hope Miss Daly will forgive me."

"Now don't say that your excellent mother

didn't see that your wardrobe was properly provided when you came to years of discretion," said the Duchess, with the air of her nephew being a pure joy. "Or your father, perhaps, was it? You must have had proper clothes at some time of your existence."

"If I had I've forgotten them. I think I remember now that I gave my topper to a friend of mine who is a coachman. I know I gave my evening togs to a very good fellow, a waiter."

"Isn't he a horror?" asked the Duchess, while Anne looked at him in amazement. It was her first experience of a gentleman turned socialist; but then of course her experiences were very limited.

"I can understand that," she said, however, in a very sweet way, "about the coachman and the waiter being friends, you know. I should find it almost unendurable to be served by anybody who was not a friend."

"I find it almost unendurable to be served at all," said Lord Godfrey. "Service is an odious word, unless it is done for love, of course."

"I should like to see you suggesting to your friends that they should drive people and wait on people for love," the Duchess said.

"Oh, of course, as things are at present the poor fellows must live."

"And as things will be?"

"As things will be they will serve us for love, or we shall serve them, that is, taking service in its widest possible sense. There won't be men lackeying other men in the future I think about.

That special kind of personal service will only be given to those who are unable to do things for themselves."

"Hear him, Anne!" said the Duchess comically. "This is the sort of thing he has been treating me to ever since he came; I'm afraid that my excellent butler, Baines, will come to me some day and give me notice: he has listened to such heresies. And any day at all I may be told that his lordship is cleaning his own boots."

"I have often cleaned my own boots," said Lord Godfrey sturdily. "I wouldn't let anybody else do for me what I wouldn't do for myself."

"So long as you don't tell Charles that you only accept his boot-cleaning as a labour of love."

"Alas, my dear aunt, your servants are not ready yet for such counsels of perfection. I have to refrain from many things because of the embarrassment they might suffer."

"What a blessing you have such good sense, my dear boy. Yet you did shake hands with those boatmen the other day."

"They weren't embarrassed by it. I always shake hands with people with whom I have been on friendly terms. They were delightful fellows. It is only your domestic servants who shrink from being treated as men and brothers. It is the abominable system."

"I've never cleaned my own boots," said Anne, "but I've currycombed a horse, because I couldn't be sure he'd be well done otherwise."

Lord Godfrey stared at Anne's delicate hands, as though he saw the currycomb in them.

"That's what I call a service of love," he said.

"I shouldn't mind doing anything for an animal I was fond of," said Anne; "nor, indeed, for any animal that needed a service. Nor for children or old or sick people."

"That is precisely how I regard things," said Lord Godfrey approvingly, "and I think it is a shame that we able-bodied people should permit men and women like ourselves to render us services which should only be done for the old and sick and children."

"Pooh!" said the Duchess, "I keep up an establishment just that my servants may wait on each other. The things that are done for me wouldn't keep one pair of hands busy."

"That may be so, but why shouldn't your own very capable hands do them?"

"Think of all the people you'd throw out of employment, Godfrey. Shall you expect your wife to clean her own boots?"

"I shall clean them for her; that will be a service of love. Not that it would do her any harm to do it for herself."

"Would you believe," asked the Duchess, "that he waits on me hand and foot?"

"Because I like to do it; because it's the expression of my affection for you."

"Ah, dear boy!" The Duchess's face glowed. "It's nice of you to say that. Do you begin to understand, Anne, why I put up with his fads and theories?"

"It is not very difficult to understand," said Anne graciously.

"Yet he is a horror." To judge by the Duchess's eyes a horror was a very pleasant thing. "I shall never forget how his poor mother told me that her carriage overtook him one day when he was tramping up a hill, laden down, like the ass and its panniers, with an old goody's marketing."

"She couldn't carry it herself," said Lord Godfrey simply. "My mother did not really think that I ought not to have done it. But now, my dear aunt, it is no use talking about me any longer. You are making me a bore of the first magnitude. And all the time Miss Daly quite agrees with me."

"Oh, does she? You don't know Anne's pride, Godfrey. Her pride is . . . is . . ." The Duchess cast about her for a word and found it,—“her pride is insensate.”

Anne laughed, colouring a little.

"I agree with a great deal that Lord Godfrey has been saying," she said.

"You are thinking of your Irish peasants. But it is really that there is such an immense difference between you and them. And they are charming creatures, I acknowledge. You wouldn't like Godfrey's working-men so much. The charm of your peasants is that there is nothing of the man and the brother or the woman and sister about them. Once socialism comes in they lose their manners. Socialism means letting everybody do everything for themselves. Luckily

Godfrey can't get over his early training, so he opens a door for me and fetches and carries for me. He needn't say it's for love, for he'd do as much for any woman."

"There is nothing against it in socialism," interjected Lord Godfrey. "And surely a service of love covers all service rendered to women by men."

"I don't like the—the moneyed people," said Anne. "It is one of the painful things about living in England. There is so much money. We never suffer from that complaint in Ireland."

"I should take the money from the moneyed classes and distribute it equally," said Lord Godfrey.

"He would have no aristocracy, Anne," said the Duchess; "not an aristocracy of wealth, nor refinement, nor birth. He would have one man as good as another."

"Oh!" said Anne. "But you couldn't do it. You might as well talk of distributing beauty and genius."

"We shall do that in time," said Lord Godfrey. "I'll tell you what, Miss Daly, you must join us. You may not go all the way with us yet, but you will in time. I have discovered that there's a not very flourishing branch of the Socialist League in Elsdon. I'm going to reorganise it. Can't you help me?"

"Can't you let Elsdon alone, Godfrey? Elsdon employers are good to their people. The people are content."

"It is the worst thing possible for them to be content. We shall stir up discontent."

: "Then Anne won't help you."

The young man looked at Anne appealingly. She was good to look upon. He felt that her adhesion would be a great help to socialism.

"One of our planks is justice to Ireland," he said. "When we have educated the people a bit I want to get down an Irish member to speak at one of our meetings. I have little confidence in Parliament, but those fellows are going the right way about, taking from the rich to give to the poor."

Anne had no more love of an argument as an argument than is common with women, and, like her sex generally, made up in heat what she lacked in debating power.

"They are misleading the people altogether," said Anne, with sudden, quiet violence. "When they depended on us, the gentry, it was far better. We, at least those of us who did our duty, protected them from the misfortunes that would fall upon them."

"It is altogether contrary to justice and equality," went on the socialist calmly, "that one class should have even the power of protection over another. We would level everything."

"You can't. There will always be hills and hollows," said Anne.

She was already tired of the discussion, and again like a woman, was disposed to think little of the capacity of the person who took the opposite view to opinions she cherished.

"Bravo! Anne," said the Duchess. And then — "My poor Godfrey, *what* a socialist you have captured!"

"I don't despair of converting her," said Lord Godfrey with excellent temper.

"I'd rather you'd get angry," said Anne. "I don't like your English patience."

"It's another wrong to Ireland," said the Duchess.

Anne laughed.

"And a very trying one," she replied.

At this moment Angela came into the room, and the conversation took a less polemical turn. Yet the Duchess, watching eagerly for the effect of Angela on Lord Godfrey, at first sight felt disappointed. He was plainly more interested in the discussion which Angela's coming had put an end to, and his eyes followed his aunt and Miss Daly when they had withdrawn themselves a little for a confidential chat.

"You must ask us to dinner," the Duchess said, "though you may expect to see that boy in a suit of navy serge, for he won't wear evening clothes, although I am grateful to say he hasn't yet adopted the flannel shirt and no collar which is quite the thing among his socialist friends, I understand. He's enthusiastic about John Corbett, upon whom we called to-day, and didn't seem to remember that he was one of the capitalists who ought to be despoiled. I wish he and Angela would fall in love with each other. Marriage might cure him of his nonsense."

"If it didn't drive it in deeper," said Anne. "But since Angela is engaged already——"

"My dear Anne, what a gadfly of a tongue you have—at this moment, for usually it only drops honey. Well then, Friday we shall say for you to dine at the Abbey?"

"A pretty little girl," was Lord Godfrey's verdict on Angela as he drove homeward with the Duchess.

Anne that night scribbled a long entry in her diary for Gran.

"These English are a very mad people," she wrote. "Where else would you find a young man of Lord Godfrey Ingestre's position going about dressed like a working-man, and wanting to deprive us gentlefolk of the things we haven't got? And the maddest thing about him was, that he thought I, Anne Daly, could agree with him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INTRUDER.

MR OLIVAREZ had again dined at Minster. On this occasion his demeanour had not been as before, when he had quite obviously been Mr Corbett's guest as a business connection rather than as a friend or even a very congenial acquaintance. On the first occasion he had remained in the dining-room almost to the hour when the brougham was to take him to the station and had only made his appearance in the drawing-room, redolent of cigar-smoking, to say good-bye to the ladies.

On this occasion, to Anne's annoyance and amazement, he had followed her and Angela to the drawing-room almost immediately. He had come in and straddled the hearthrug with an air of ownership that offended Anne extremely, and had stood there staring in a well-pleased way at the two white creatures glimmering in the half-light of the shaded lamp as they sat side by side, their faces in shadow, the golden light throwing up brilliant reflections from the white silk gown each was wearing.

"We can't live by business alone," he said; "eh, Miss Daly? Corbett is a most exacting man. He'd have kept me to it if he could, but, 'no,' I said, 'we can't desert the ladies.' He let me go, only half pleased with me, I assure you. We can't all plug along like Corbett. Some of us have souls above business."

"Papa thought no doubt that he was pleasing you best by talking of business, Mr Olivarez," said Angela with a little quiver of anger in her voice which Anne noticed with surprise and loved her for. She had always thought Angela so sweet-tempered. But it was dear of her to be up in arms at a disparagement of her father, although Anne herself would have ignored anything that came from the same source: but then Angela was younger.

If John Corbett had not come into the drawing-room quickly it would have been rather awkward, for Anne would not have spoken to save her life, and Angela was offended, and the two little girls who sat on footstools by Anne's sofa, their golden hair against her white gown, were absorbed in their story books. Old Mrs Corbett was keeping her room and Hetty was with her.

However, the entrance of the master of the house with his two sons saved Mr Olivarez from the silence with which the two elder girls would have received his liveliness and the compliments he was turning over in his mind with which to delight them. With the coming of the men folk the chilliness of the atmosphere perceptibly

thawed. John Corbett flung another log of wood on the fire which leaped up to receive it and wrapped it about in fragrant flames. Young John engaged Mr Olivarez in a discussion of the latest American coal strike. Arthur turned on half-a-dozen electric lights. The tea came in and Anne took her place at the tea-tray, wishing that horrible man, as she called him, would not stare so, and would not insist on handing the cups, a thing the children claimed as their privilege in the happy homelike evenings.

When he had had his tea, Mr Corbett asked for some music. Anne's Irish songs had taken the household by storm. She did not want to sing to Mr Olivarez. She did not know why she thought of him in the matter, or why she was possessed by such an odd rage and impatience in his presence, so that it became a positive suffering to her. However, she could not well refuse; and the piano would be a refuge from those bold black eyes which were fixed on her in a way she found unendurable.

The boy, Cyril, who was her devoted lover, ran to turn her pages. But while Anne smiled at him, some one pushed him aside.

"Allow *me*!" said Mr Olivarez, flashing all his diamonds before Anne's eyes as his fingers felt for the parting of the pages.

"Please, no," said Anne, with a half-despairing glance over her shoulder towards the fireside group. "He likes to do it for me. Please let him do it."

Little Cyril had not relinquished his position.

The insolent strange person had pushed him out indeed, but his small hand was yet extended to turn the pages. He was looking at Olivarez with a flushed face and a heaving breast which would have amused that gentleman highly if only he had noticed them.

Suddenly a hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Come, Olivarez," said Mr Corbett in a gentle, good-humoured way. "We want you to tell us a little more of this business. And it is the boy's privilege which none of us dare interfere with."

Olivarez turned and stared at Cyril, then burst into laughter.

"Why, I had no idea," he said good-humouredly. "Forgive me, young gentleman."

He allowed himself to be led away, leaving Cyril breathing fire and fury after him. That anybody should have dared to laugh at him before Anne! If the boy's eyes following the black broadcloth back had been swords, then Olivarez had been stabbed to the heart.

To Anne his disappearance was an immense relief, and she felt extravagantly grateful to John Corbett.

"Never mind, old fellow," she whispered to the boy, whose hurt sensitiveness she felt like a sore place of her own. "He doesn't know any better. We didn't want him interfering with us, did we?"

"All right," said the boy magnanimously. "I suppose he can't help being a beast."

"I would I were on yonder hill," sang Anne,

filling the great room with the wild and rich melody of her voice.

"I would I were on yonder hill,
'Tis there I'd weep and cry my fill,
Till every tear should turn a mill
Is go d-tiedh tu à mhuirnin slàn.

I'll dye my petticoats, I'll dye them red,
Around the world I'll beg my bread
Until my parents shall wish me dead
Is go d-tiedh tu à mhuirnin slàn.

I wish, I wish, I wish in vain.
I wish I had my heart again,
And vainly think I'd not complain
Is go d-tiedh tu à mhuirnin slàn."

A silence fell on the room as they listened to the artless words and the delicate music, as the passionate tenderness of the Irish refrain reached the listeners' ears through the cloak of the strange words. The silence lasted even when Anne had finished, till some one asked her for more.

She sang "The Castle of Dromore," "The Foggy Dew," "'Twas pretty to be in Ballinderry," forgetting the one among her audience for whom she would not have wished to sing. She did not want to leave the piano, feeling securely intrenched there, with Cyril's shining loyal eyes sending her love-glances. If she left the piano, the man, as she called him in abhorrence, might even presume to sit down beside her. And then what was she to do? She

detested the idea of making anything like a scene by getting up and leaving him: and she felt it was impossible she could talk to him, so she stayed at the piano, singing her wild songs, playing her wild music, till it was time for the unwelcome stranger to depart.

He bowed over her hand with a flowery compliment as he said good-night. Anne looking down,—like a tragedy queen, though she was quite unconscious of the pose,—at the division between his black curls, detested him more than ever.

When he had gone she went to a distant window and flung it up, letting in the moonlight and the pure sharp air. There had been a slight fall of snow, and the flakes of it lay on the ivy about the window. She stood a few seconds, drawing deep breaths. Then Mr Corbett, who had accompanied his guest downstairs and had returned, came to her side.

"You will take cold," he said in a gentle peremptory way. "Have you forgotten that you are in evening dress?"

He closed the window as he spoke.

"I felt stifled," she said.

"Poor Olivarez. He's not a bad fellow. I'm sorry he annoyed you, Miss Daly."

"Forgive me. He was your guest," said Anne. "I'm ashamed of my own unreason. But I do not like him."

They went back and joined the little circle at the fire. Every one seemed easier now that the guest had departed. Angela fetched her work-

basket, and took out a delicate bit of needlework. She always amazed Anne by her industry. Anne loved to be idle at times, and could no more have made herself under-garments, or dainty baby-clothes for other people's children, as Angela did, than she could have made a watch. The children asked to stay up a little longer. Mr Olivarez had spoilt their evening. Their father smiled acquiescence. The two young men were having a friendly argument into which the father interjected now and again some remark, affectionate and rallying.

"It is so nice to be by ourselves again," breathed Cyril devoutly.

"It is so nice," echoed the little girls.

Anne, sitting in the chimney corner, felt it pleasant to be one of that circle and accounted of it as by right. Yet only four months ago how little she could have believed that possible. Then she had thought of the days that intervened between her and Witch's Castle as a desert of arid time. Now, she put out shoots and tendrils that gathered about the new life, the new people, and made them dear to her. Not like Witch's Castle, of course. Oh, never that, but still dear as she had not thought it possible for English persons and an English house to be.

She was thinking her thoughts and insensibly watching Angela's face. Suddenly she became conscious that Angela was listening, listening although she never lifted her head from the white seam. Her eyes turned to the direction

of the door. Her lips parted a little. A colour came into her cheeks. She turned her head to one side, as though to catch the light upon her sewing.

"You should marry a poor man, Angela," said Anne, under cover of all the gay chatter that was going on around them. "You are so industrious. How much you have done since last night, and how beautifully!"

The door opened and some one came in. Not Willie Armytage. Anne had had a half-idea that Angela might have been expecting Willie Armytage, who was away for a few days with friends at a distance. It was the young painter, Mr Vallance, who came in. He had been at dinner, but had been very silent, as though he too had found Mr Olivarez an oppression, and had disappeared immediately afterwards. He came and went as he liked: it was a privilege of his art.

The children welcomed him with many shouts. They wanted him to play a game with them. Angela looked up and smiled at him. Mr Corbett said: "Well, my lad," as though he had been a boy of his own. Now that he had come Anne had a curious sense that the circle was more complete. She looked at Angela. Angela was absorbed in her seam: a dreamy and quiet sweetness lay upon her lips as though she smiled a little. She wore a contented air as though now she could settle herself to the thing in hand without any more waiting. It caused Anne a vague perturbation.

Hetty had not come back to them. Anne was always a little more careful about Hetty than about Angela, because she loved her less. Hetty was wanted for the round game. Cyril offered to fetch her. No, Anne would do it: she was going to her own room for a book, and she wanted to say good-night to Mrs Corbett. Mrs Corbett had a maid to wait on her, but one of her granddaughters often assisted her at going to bed or getting up or making her simple toilette for dinner. Of late Anne had sometimes done this, and Mrs Corbett had accepted her ministrations gratefully. Anne had learnt to be deft and clever in her ways from attending on Madam: and her offices were rendered with a tenderness the old woman felt and appreciated. If Mrs Corbett were not yet in bed she would take Hetty's place and let Hetty go back to the children.

The door was ajar as she entered it, and she saw the glow of firelight and lamplight beyond the screen which stood by it. With a little tap she passed within. She was already well in the room when she saw Hetty on her knees by her grandmother's side. Her face was buried in the comfortable lap. One of the old woman's hands was on her head like a blessing.

Hearing her Hetty sprang to her feet. The glow of the firelight sparkled on her wet eyes. She stood with her head averted from Anne.

"They want you downstairs for a game," Anne said, not looking at the child. "I have come to take your place."

Hetty went away, murmuring something which Anne could not hear. Anne remembered the Duchess's suspicions and was troubled, but said nothing. As she helped the old woman, taking down her thin gray hair and brushing it, and tucking it away within a laced nightcap, Mrs Corbett suddenly put a hand, that was a mere bunch of blue veins, on Anne's firm white one.

"They have to fight it out for themselves, haven't they, dearie?" she said pitifully. "The children, I mean. 'Tis hard to see them suffer, especially when we can't do anything for them."

"They have to fight it out," said Anne in a quiet voice which only the tenderness kept from being hard.

"You think so, dearie; there's nothing at all for us to do?"

"Nothing at all, I think, except to pray that things may be as God willed them. And His will must always be good."

The tired old peasant face looked up at the strong, beautiful, compassionate one above it.

"Even though He slay me," she murmured to herself; and then to Anne: "'Tis hard to sit and see them suffer and do nothing at all to help them. But I'll take your word for it, my dearie lady, indeed I will."

CHAPTER XV.

EASTER JOY.

It was the week before Easter, when business in Elsdon was rushing to get itself finished before the little time of suspension and lull should come; so Anne, coming in one afternoon with her hands full of daffodils, glorious single trumpets that grew in clumps among the grass of the park, was a little surprised at being overtaken by Mr Corbett. He took her armful of lilies from her.

"They become me less well than they become you," he said, with his grave smile. Then, answering the surprise in her face, "Yes," he said, "I am home early. I thought I should like the walk and get home in time to countermand the carriage. It is not often I drink tea with you and the children."

They went into the house together. Mr Corbett's own room, part study, part office, opened by an unexpected door in the panelling of the hall. There was no one in the hall: it was not yet quite the tea hour and the young people were still scattered. With his hand on the leaf in the carving that was the door-handle

he turned to Anne, who was holding out her hands for the daffodils.

"Could you give me five minutes?" he asked. "There are one or two things I want to speak to you about."

Anne followed him. The room was already dim, but he turned on the electric light, revealing the austerity of the bookcase, the plain writing-table, the hard, rush-seated chairs. The room had hardly anything about it that served merely decorative purposes. Some photographs of the children, a pastel drawing of the late Mrs Corbett which all the artist's delicate skill could not redeem from insignificance, above the mantelpiece a print of a woman's head. The latter Anne could not place, though she believed she had seen it before. Was it a Leonardo? She could not be sure. And it had a vague likeness to some living face she knew which haunted her and would not be traced.

She sat down in the chair Mr Corbett had set for her and looked at the picture.

"Who is that?" she asked. "I seem to remember it."

"It is from an early Italian painter," he answered. "I keep it because it is like a friend, a lady I once knew who is dead."

Ah, so that was what Angel Sachevarell was like, the shining, misty, star-like face, looking up with an air as though something above it were drawing it upward in wonder and aspiration. Yet she had stooped to a lowly lover. Nay, not stooped—Anne put the word away

from her—rather had seen that the best was best wherever it was placed. With difficulty she turned her eyes away from the picture.

"It is beautiful," she said; "and it is oddly like some one I know."

"Angela?" he suggested.

"Angela and some one else. I shall remember presently. I know it is some one who looks like that in flashes."

Oddly enough, for she had the clue which John Corbett had not, she did not think of the young painter. She withdrew her eyes slowly from the picture, and turned the full, quiet, friendly light of them on Mr Corbett.

"Well?" she said.

"You were wondering why I brought you here. First, I want to tell you, I've had a visit from Olivarez."

A conscious flush darkened the face that was usually so calm, and faded as slowly.

"Mr Olivarez!" Anne repeated wonderingly.

"You are wondering what he can have to do with you. Well, my dear Miss Daly, pray forgive me. I think it is best to tell you the truth. Olivarez is, he says, in love with you."

"How dare he!" cried Anne.

"Why, he has no idea that it was so very daring. As a matter of fact he suggested himself to me as a guest again. I had great difficulty in refusing him. I'm afraid I've made an enemy of Olivarez."

"Does it matter?"

"He thinks it matters. He can injure me in

business. But I am not afraid of that. I felt that you were in the protection of my house, that I could not have you troubled and worried. I told Olivarez frankly that I believed his suit would be unwelcome."

"Thank you. And he, what did he say?"

Again John Corbett flushed.

"He said . . . I would rather not repeat what he said. It was something that was quite untrue at all events. But Olivarez is not a man to be put off by my word. His burst of confidence did not mean that he thought I had any say in the matter. He will go to the fountain head."

"I shall not see him, nor answer a letter of his."

"For the matter of that it is the right thing that a man should go to the fountain head. We must not blame Olivarez because he will not take my word for yours. Nor, though he swore vengeance against me for my discouragement, do I suppose he will really try to do me any harm. It is his Southern excitability. I believe him to be a decent fellow at heart."

"You are very generous," said Anne, a little scornfully.

John Corbett looked at her wistfully.

"I only want to be just," he said. "I don't like Olivarez very much myself. We have little in common. But he is well spoken of, well thought of. And he is immensely rich."

"As though that mattered."

"It would matter to a great many young ladies."

"It does not matter to me at all events,"

she said as though she was tired of the discussion. "I detest the man. The very thought of him fills me with loathing. How dare he!"

The least little smile crossed John Corbett's face as he sat with his eyes in shadow. Anne's rage was almost childish, like her simplicity, like many others of her qualities. He thought of what the Duchess had told him about the poverty that sat on the hearthstone of Witch's Castle. A magnificent poverty, wearing its rags like kingly purple, he thought, since Anne so despised money. There he was not at one with her. Money was a great power, a great influence, a great possession. Why, without money he could no more have been to Angel Sachevarell what he had been than if he had remained a ragged working-boy at her gate. And apart from that sentiment he had still the successful business man's appreciation of money as success, achievement.

"I have done what I could to save you annoyance," he said. "I can forbid Olivarez to come here. I cannot forbid his writing to you. Perhaps the annoyance will not finally cease till he has your word. And you may meet him at other places, at Mrs Perkins's for example."

"Then he shall have my word," said Anne loftily.

John Corbett looked at her for an instant, hesitated, and then spoke.

"I would like to say to you as I might to my own daughter that Olivarez has a magnificent position to offer to the woman who marries him. She will have the world's ball at her foot. He

has all the power great wealth can give. And I am bound to say that he spends his money nobly. Ask the hospitals and all who are doing good work."

"Is that all?" asked Anne, pulling him up short.

"I might say more if it were any use."

"Is your conscience still unsatisfied?"

"How did you know it was a matter of conscience?"

"I guessed it because you made a set speech, with obvious painstaking. Now let us talk of something pleasanter than the wealth of Mr Olivarez and the uses he puts it to."

"Of something pleasanter."

Mr Corbett's eyes began to sparkle.

"I have thought of something pleasant for you and Angela and myself," he said. "It is the sweet after the pill. There is an invention we have heard of which is in the hands of an Irishman. We want to get it before it is in the market. I cross to Dublin on Saturday. I thought of taking Angela to see something of the country. We shall be away a fortnight or three weeks. Would you like to come with us and spend a portion of the time with your grandmother?"

"All." Anne's eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed. "All."

"When the Dublin business is concluded I thought of taking Angela to see Killarney and the South. We might pick you up, perhaps in Dublin, as we returned."

Anne's face fell.

"You will come to Witch's Castle?" she said.

"Gran would be dreadfully offended if you did not."

"Would we not be a trouble? Madam Daly will want you to herself."

"Not Gran! She delights in company. How good you are, Mr Corbett! I shall race home from Dublin while you do your business there and tell Gran that you and Angela are coming."

So it was settled. There was hardly time to do more than telegraph to Gran. Miss May came at a moment's notice to look after the children and pretend to look after the great house as she had done before in her kind, plodding way.

Engagements had to be broken or postponed. It was a transformed Anne who flung herself on the Duchess, laughing and excited, to tell her she was off to Ireland. And the time after Easter was so lovely in Ireland, so fresh and clean, as though the world had been made over again.

She found a half-hour in which to visit Mrs Perkins. She wanted Mrs Perkins to come now and again for a chat with old Mrs Corbett while they were away.

Mrs Perkins promised that the old soul should not be lonely.

"And I've been thinking," she said to Anne, "over what you said to me. Maybe one of these days I'll write to my man of business. He saw the girl, if I didn't. But what good is to be expected of her? You are as innocent as you look, and that's as innocent as a child with its milk teeth."

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLD SERVANT.

THEY were gone, and Minster once again was given over to the plain business people whose possession of it had been a grief to Mason.

Mrs Perkins had not been alone in her fancy for Anne. The proudest and most exclusive people in the county had called on her. Old Lady Packington, who had turned her back on Minster since the Sachevarells' days and still referred to Mr Corbett as "the new man," had driven straight off to leave cards the day after she had met Anne visiting the Duchess of St Kilda. Her Grace, for all her strawberry leaves, did not take the lead in exclusiveness in the county. She was too fond of odd people, politicians, musicians, artists, writers, actors, people in all sorts of movements, for her friendship to confer a hall-mark on its recipient; and old Lady Packington, not being in the secret of things, had been rather inclined to look on Jane St Kilda as a backslider in that old matter of the Sachevarells and their supplanter.

Lady Packington had come, and after her the Misses de Saumarez, and Lady Hilda Trevanion,

and all that was most exclusive in the county. As a matter of fact, Anne's visitors had rather abashed some of the old friends. Mrs James Armytage grew more attached than ever to Minster and its occupants, but others of her rank and connection, comfortable mothers of families, with Quaker quiet in their eyes, others who were devoted to the doctrines of Wesleyan Methodism, who were but a generation removed from the working-people, came to Minster with perturbation in their spirits, and never by any chance on Anne's At Home day.

"You should speak up for yourself," Mrs James said sharply on one occasion to her daughter, Miriam. Mr Vallance had compared Miriam Armytage to a little well, cool and deep, which spreads refreshment around it; and the comparison was an apt one. She had sat all through an afternoon call silent, with a heavenly contemplation on her face in the shadow of her fashionable hat and veil; and, though Mrs James did not know it, her attitude had excited Lady Packington's commendation.

"The mother made me feel hot," she said, "fussing about and clucking like a little, much befeathered hen. But the daughter is refreshing to look at. Are those Armytages very wealthy, do you know, Jane St Kilda? Because if they are wealthy enough to be taken notice of by us,—I think it ought to be half-a-million at least, since we are so exclusive,—I shall take up the girl. She might marry my cousin, George Dare. He has been rather a trouble

to his parents, and this girl looks as if she might reform him. How much should you say, Jane? Eight brothers! Oh, then, I'm afraid it won't do. And George is so hard to please. He looks at every heiress I find for him as though she were a horse, and needed beauty and spirit and blood and breeding. Which I tell him is ridiculous where a wife is concerned. This little saint might do for him if the *dot* were sufficient. Poor boy, he has debts and can't please himself."

However Lady Packington was a very worldly-minded old woman, if sometimes a rather amusing one. She was as curious, too, as it is possible to imagine any one, and would have been deeply interested in Mr Hilary Vallance if she had known anything about him, and about the extraordinary supposition concerning him entertained by the Corbetts' old housekeeper.

Mr Vallance had begun the painting of the chapel at Minster, and in those cool, radiant after-Easter days had the place pretty much to himself, since Hetty was gone on a visit to the Reuben Armytages, and the little ones spent most of the fine days botanising in the woods with their governess. Arthur had gone with Hetty, and John, very important in his father's absence, was at the works every day.

Mr Vallance seemed to enjoy rambling about the place. When he rested from his work he was to be met with, straying in and out of the gardens, smoking, talking to old gardeners and gamekeepers, persons of long memories, and

apparently very well satisfied with the emptiness of the place.

If he had but known it, Mrs Mason was often on his track. Mason was getting old and rather eccentric. Some of the younger servants had noticed her absorption in the young artist, and had jested flippantly among themselves concerning it. If she happened to come face to face with Mr Vallance Mrs Mason never spoke to him, but glided out of his way with an old-fashioned curtsy when he would have spoken and thanked her for the things she had done for him during his illness.

Midway of Lady Katharine's rose-garden, one of the sights of Minster, is a pond full of gold-fish. A dolphin in the midst spurts a high jet of glittering water from his nostrils. Around it there is a grassy space, and then a little amphitheatre of seats cut in the green terraces. On one of these Hilary Vallance sat one April day watching the clouds pile themselves in soft smoke and mother o' pearl masses.

Suddenly he was aware of Mrs Mason standing and curtseying profoundly before him

"I have wanted to tell you, Master Humphrey," she said, "only there were always folks about, — how glad I am that you have come back."

He stared at her, and then a bewildering softness fell upon his face.

"My good soul," he said, "I'm very grateful for your kindness. I remember your face by my bed when I was ill. But what bee have

you got in your bonnet? I'm not Master Humphrey. My name is Hilary Vallance."

Mason shook her head. Her old hand smoothed out a fold of her black silk apron. Her dim eyes looked at him with a devotion which he found it hard to refuse.

"Don't tell me you're not Master Humphrey," she said, "for I won't believe it. And since I knew there was a Sachevarell yet walking this earth I've felt that the Lord might call me any day and welcome. I ought to ha' been your nurse, Master Humphrey, if your father, Master Anthony, hadn't gone away to foreign parts, and been as though he was dead to all of us. Eh, but he was bonny, Master Anthony! And you're the image of him. Many a girl 'ud have walked the world barefoot after Master Anthony if but he'd ha' given her the nod. He had only eyes for one lady, after the unlucky day they met; but many a one had eyes only for Master Anthony."

She stood pleating her apron now in her fingers, her eyes growing dimmer and dimmer as she recalled the old memories.

Suddenly the young man sprang to his feet, and taking her gently by the shoulder, forced her to sit in one of the rustic chairs that faced the fish-pond. Then he stood before her looking down at her, his eyes wonderfully bright and soft.

"He would not have thought to be so remembered," he said. "And so you are sure I am Master Humphrey."

"Quite sure, sir."

"Have you said so to any one?"

"To Miss Daly, sir, Miss Anne. She understood. You could trust her to understand. There's a lady for you! She asks a service as though it were a favour and is only proud to her equals."

"And what did Miss Daly say?"

"She told me not to talk about it. I wasn't likely to. Would I have them know you were come down in the world to be painting pictures when you should be master of Minster."

"Not that, Mason. The entail was broken long ago. I am very glad to earn the money Mr Corbett puts in my way."

"He would make it twenty times as much if he knew who you were. He has the right feeling for the Sachevarells, that I will say for him."

The young man frowned ever so slightly.

"My good Mason, pictures have their commercial value like other things. Mr Corbett will pay me the commercial value of mine. My staying here depends on your silence. I am prospering here and do not wish to be compelled to move on. I was in very low water the night I stumbled in the road and had my head laid open by Grenadier's hoof. A lucky kick! Do you know, Mason, that when I am done here I am to paint the walls of a Children's Hospital in London for the Duchess, as her memorial to her son. And the present Duke may give me the painting of the banquet-hall as well as the Chapel at Ewerne. I shall be a rich man."

"Lord!" said the old woman, "to think you should come to painting walls and ceilings for money! The Sachevarells kept their own painting man ever and always. Look at the picture-gallery!"

"I don't know that I would give up the painting for Minster if I had to make my choice between them."

"Lord, Master Humphrey, what nonsense you do talk!"

"You think Miss Daly has told no one, Mason?"

"Would she tell herself after bidding me not to tell?"

"She might. There might be reasons. But I don't think she has told. I should read it in—in—somebody's candid eyes. She would understand that I could not come back like this if it were known who I was. Yes, Mason, I am Humphrey Sachevarell. Your faithful eyes have found it out. I did not mean to have told it to any one."

"You will let me do what I can for you, Master Humphrey? Mend your stockings now; and I don't suppose you have a button on. Your old Polly would love to do it. Lord, the things I did for Master Anthony in the old times. He had a way with the girls; he couldn't help it; but he had eyes for no one once *she* had come."

The young man extended a frank hand to her.

"You will do what you like for me, only keep my secret."

"You won't go away as your father did before you?"

"I hope not. I don't want to go from where I have found friends as Hilary Vallance."

The old woman lifted his hand to her lips.

"I was cheated out o' being your nurse, Master Humphrey," she said. "Lord, how I should have loved to do anything for Master Anthony's bairn!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

ANNE had had a happy fortnight of it before the evening came when Mr Corbett and Angela were expected at Witch's Castle, when they were to see Anne under a new aspect.

She drove herself to meet the long car which was to deposit them and their luggage at Portroe Cross-Roads. Her conveyance was an old outside car, the once blue cushions of which were gray from exposure to wind and weather; but of this and other deficiencies she seemed absolutely unconscious. Her eyes rested humorously on the luggage to which Angela had been adding since they had met last.

"Ah, Angela!" she said. "If you lived here for a year you'd have to do without superfluities, child. Here, Billy Brady,"—to a small urchin who was creeping up the grassy lane jerking the reins behind a diminutive donkey which matched its cart,—“take great care of the luggage. Don't go letting it fall into the sea as you did when you fetched Miss Judy's trunk. Have you anything for me, Martin Doyle?" to the driver of the long car who was industriously rummaging

in "the well" of the car. "Ah, that's right. You haven't forgotten the meat. The Madam will remember it to you, Martin. And butter and candles and a box of biscuits. I think that's all right, thank you."

Mr Corbett, who was assisting the boy to lift the luggage on to the little cart, glanced at Angela, looking like a lily of the fields in her pretty frock, and smiled. This was an Anne neither of them knew. He felt vaguely conscious that they had not seen the real Anne at all till now.

She was wearing a dress of rough homespun the colour of lilac. A cap of the same material was on the blue-black coils of her hair. The colour was repeated in her eyes. She looked as though the fortnight had been of much benefit to her, although there was not a trace of sunburn on the clear healthy paleness of her cheeks. The long car was not in such a hurry with His Majesty's mails that it could not delay to see Miss Anne and her visitors off. "Sure what's the hurry?" asked Martin Doyle, when an English commercial traveller, who found himself in odd company, suggested that they had better be moving on.

As Anne packed away the things in "the well" of her own car she kept up a running fire of greetings and inquiries with the people on the long car. Could this possibly be the Anne they had known? At last she had got up Mr Corbett and Angela on the other side of the car, had taken the dilapidated reins in her hands, and

with a chorus of blessings from the occupants of the long car they moved off.

During his fortnight in Ireland Mr Corbett had learned to sit on an outside car, and Angela had to some extent acquired the art, although she always carried her heart in her mouth; and the excitement of being driven fast under the circumstances brought a light to her eyes and a colour to her cheek.

Mr Corbett smiled across now at Anne who was sitting far back on her side of the car holding the reins firmly. The horse, a long, rakish-looking bay, could go like the wind when he chose. It was evident that his driver had him thoroughly in hand.

"I begin to understand, Miss Daly," he said, "how horribly dull you must have found us. We've been long enough in this country, Angela and I, to have learnt something of how eventful life is here."

"We are livelier," Anne admitted. "I suppose things do happen in England although they never seem to. I was very lonely at first. Afterwards, when I came to know you all it was different."

Angela sent her friend an adoring glance from where she sat surreptitiously grasping a strap of a cushion lest a sudden jerk should send her flying from her insecure position. Mr. Corbett too looked and felt distinctly pleased.

"That's a nice horse you're driving," he said, noticing the pace at which they were going.

"Gran bred him. I've had him from a little foal, and I broke him myself. He'd do anything

for me, would Paudeen. He goes nicely now. When I came back first I thought he'd kill me. He doesn't get enough to do when I'm away, and Gran won't let him be put to rough work."

They had taken to the sands by this time, and were driving across a luxurious stretch of yielding and spongy softness. Just as they entered on it, Anne turned and shook her whip furiously in the direction of the little donkey-cart, which was visible at the far end of the grassy lane from which they had turned.

"It's that little monkey, Billy," she explained. "He'd take to the sands if he wasn't frightened of me, and the tide would catch him and his mother would be left with only ten instead of eleven. What matter? she'd make as much work over it as though he were her only one. Those are Atlantic rollers out there, Angela. There isn't a bit of ground between us and America. What do you think of our sunsets?"

Angela's eyes, full of the flying gold of the sunset, answered her.

"In one hour the sea will be in this bay," Anne went on. "It comes in very fast. If I weren't sure of Paudeen I wouldn't take this short cut with any one but myself on the car. We've to get round that Point before the tide reaches it."

Mr Corbett looked along the line of her whip to the distant spur of rock lying far out towards the water.

"We shall do it?" he asked.

"I shan't drown you," she replied. "I know exactly how the tide comes in. It will be well

up in this bay before the Point is wet. I wouldn't trust any one but myself."

They turned the Point with the water bubbling under Paudeen's feet. Once round it they were on a stone causeway well above the sea level.

"We hadn't much time to spare," said Mr Corbett.

"Exactly what I calculated," she answered. "I knew there would be just time and no more."

"If we had had an accident?"

"There would still have been time for you and Angela to get in before the tide. There is a way up the cliffs. You would have been safe enough except that you might have got wet feet."

"And the horse?"

"I should have tried to get Paudeen round the Point, even if I had to leave the car and Gran's stores behind."

"Do you suppose I'd have left you to that?"

Anne's eyes looked at him tranquilly.

"You'd have had to. Paudeen would do things for me he'd never have done for you. However, there was no risk. Do you suppose I'd have run it with you and Angela in my charge? It is different when I'm alone."

"I hope you don't run risks when you're alone," said Mr Corbett seriously.

"I never run risks," she answered lightly. "I'm too fond of Gran for that. But it is permitted to be a little more careless when one is by one's self. I often walk across here at low tide. It saves three miles of bog road: and now

I come to think of it, an accident in the bog would be at least as serious as an accident in the bay. I promise that you shall run no danger."

"I am glad you are coming back with us to the safety of Minster," said Mr Corbett, smiling, while Angela looked at her friend with alarmed eyes as though she pictured her in desperate straits.

"That is Witch's Castle ahead!" said Anne, pointing with the whip to a glimmering light that showed itself against a black wall of mountain inland. The light was like a silver point in the tender blue of the atmosphere. "It is the lamp which Maureen, Gran's old maid, always lights in my room at evening when I am out and expected home."

They had turned off the sea-road now and were climbing a hard rocky lane that led upwards towards the mountains. Behind them the sunset had turned rose-colour, had filled the Western sky with flying rose-leaves in drifted masses. The splendour began to light up the dark mountain, turning its sombre shadows to rose-colour: and the fires were lit in every pool of bog water.

"How beautiful!" cried Angela.

"Yes: we are doing our best for you," said Anne, with a humorous fond glance at her. "I won't say we are so fine every evening."

The light had caught the windows of Witch's Castle now. It was a building of three stories with a square keep at one corner. The windows showed like eyes. All the building was densely covered in ivy.

"It is the ivy holds it together," said Anne. "If that were withdrawn the upper story would collapse upon the others. The house runs round a courtyard, or did once: but three sides of it are uninhabitable. Only the fourth turns a brave face to the world. It is as old as we are, and we are very old, as old as the mountains."

She said it so simply that there was no appearance of pride in the statement. While they looked back to watch the sunset Paudeen had turned in at an open gate. The house lay before them beyond a short avenue of trees full of enormous crows' nests, in which the inhabitants were settling themselves for the night, making a great to-do about it.

Presently they drew up at a door that was in line with the six windows which ran across the house. Beyond glimmered a low hall, panelled in wood, a staircase sweeping up from the middle of it, at either side two doors.

"I always stoop as I enter," said Anne when she had given up the horse and car to the hands of a wild-looking youth. "You had better do the same. Everything is little and low at Witch's Castle. It was built before the spacious days. The rooms are like birds' nests. Take the gentleman's coat, Nora,"—to the barefooted, pink-frocked handmaiden.

The door at the right-hand side of the hall opened, and old Madam Daly stood bowing on the threshold. Beyond her one caught a glimpse of the white-panelled room, an old girandole, a harp on a little raised dais, and the polished floor

which reflected the leaping flames of a fire that was out of sight.

"What an enchanted country!" thought Angela, who had had time to fall under the spell of the mountains and the waters, the clouds and the mists, who had thought so often during this last week or two of what Mr Vallance would say if he could see the beauty they saw day after day, from the side of a long car, from the top of a mail-coach, from the windows of a leisurely train. "What an enchanted country, and what a dear little fairy godmother!"

Madam's face with its innumerable fine lines and wrinkles was looking graciously on her and her father. If Angela had only understood, the extra graciousness was a concession to their lowly birth. She felt her hand caught in hands the skin of which had the texture and the softness of old kid gloves. A little nip of a kiss was imprinted on her cheek.

"My Nan's friends are very kindly welcome," said the old lady in a high, piping voice. "Pray come in, the night is cold and the wind rising. What a hubbub they make, to be sure, the wind and the sea. What did you say? That it was a lovely evening? We still have our sunsets and our scenery left to us. I hope you've had a pleasant journey. Ah, my friend and director, the Abbé O'Rourke."

The old priest had risen from his chair by the fire and stood beside it, his old silver head bent in an attitude of humility that well became him. He had a tortoise-shell snuff-box in his hand

which, oddly enough, contained, set in the lid, an exquisitely-painted flying love which the Abbé liked to attribute to Boucher or Watteau. He was in the habit of apologising for the possession of a bibelot so unpriestly when he met with any one likely to misunderstand. "It is exquisite art," he would say. "I place it with my Theocritus, my Anacreon. Ah, how much we owe to the pagan world which, lacking the Supreme Beauty, had yet such intuition of beauty."

This thought was for the more discerning. For the less he would simply remark that the snuff-box was the gift of an empress. A little dust of snuff lay habitually on his white lapels.

He engaged Mr Corbett in conversation while Angela sat in the chair he had just vacated looking about the austere room with wonder and delight. She was thinking how white, how bright it looked, as though the morning sunlight must be always in it.

There was a bare stretch of floor since all the furniture was close to the walls. The few rugs though ancient were very good, old Persian, which kept their beauty although the colours had grown faint. There was a water-colour portrait of Madam above the fireplace, set in the panel, with drooping black ringlets on each white shoulder and a rose set by her ear, with features ethereally delicate, and bright eyes under a night of long lashes.

The Abbé was laboriously talking to Mr Corbett of things he thought likely to interest him, of the concerns of his own country; and the

Abbé's English history was thirty years old. He had taken a fancy to the English people at first sight.

"The man has distinction in his fine face," he said afterwards to Madam. "Not perhaps our distinction, my friend, yet distinction all the same. And the child: there is nothing but innocence behind that face."

"You are looking at that little thing," Madam was saying with great animation to Angela. "It is myself, I see you have recognised it. Poor Lautrec: he promised great things in the sixties, but he was killed in the Siege of Paris. It is a pretty thing, but it did not do me justice. I was far, far prettier than that. When I came into a room every one used to stop talking to stare at me. I was mobbed in the streets. I will say for the Parisians that they know how to admire beauty. Anne is not a patch on me, though I hadn't her height. I was *petite*, and beauty is not counted by inches. They said that only a woman so beautiful as the Empress could have borne to have had me constantly in her neighbourhood. We made so complete a contrast, she being fair and I dark."

"Where is Judy?" asked Anne, handing the cup of fragrant tea to Angela.

"She has run away, the little shy creature. You must find her, Anne, and tempt her out of her hiding-hole. How the wind rises! I cannot hear what the Abbé is saying about Prince Albert. A charming man. The Abbé met him at the Belgian court years before we all met at the

Tuileries. This is an Empress's cup you are drinking from, my dear. She had the cups made for me at Sèvres."

Angela looked down a little awe-stricken at the cup she held in her hand, a delicate thing of Sèvres blue with E on it in golden violets.

"Oh dear, if I should break it!" she cried involuntarily.

The old priest smiled indulgently at her. Madam Daly nodded her head.

"If you did, my dear," she said,— "well: a guest can do no wrong. And tell me now. What is the latest news? What are they doing in London? We are out of the world here. I know little of the latter-day statesmen. Ah, Lord Palmerston now,—that was a man. Your men of to-day do nothing but set us by the ears, set us by the ears. I hope you are not a Radical, Mr Corbett. I remember Mr Gladstone as a very handsome, courtly young man; too fond of theories even when he was supposed to be a sound Conservative. How shockingly he has retrograded to be sure!"

At this point Anne came and took the precious tea-cup from Angela's hand, and carried her off upstairs to rest and refresh herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOSTESS.

THE low-ceiled corridors smelt of the sea. You heard the steady beat and withdrawal of the sea upon the rocky shore as you went through the house. When Anne opened the door of a bedroom and motioned Angela to precede her within, the sea-wind from an open window blew in their faces. With a little cry of joy Angela ran to the window and leant through it. The Atlantic was heaving before her mile on mile, the last colours of the sunset yet reflected on its greyness.

She drew a long breath before she turned round and looked about the room. The floor was bare as the room downstairs, not even a rug by the bedside. There was hardly any furniture except the great square, four-poster, mahogany bedstead, its hangings of blue and silver damask riddled through by time and moths. The curtains by the open window showed as fine lace-work before Angela's eyes. There was a blackened, gilt-framed glass over the mantle-shelf. A basin-stand of common grained deal held a chipped basin and jug of the cheapest kind. A plain deal table served as dressing-table, but the toilet-

glass was Sheraton and had brass candle-sconces either side of it.

"I hope you will be comfortable," Anne said. "See, here is a cupboard for your frocks. I hope Rose has turned the broken chairs and all the other rubbish out of it. Yes, that is all right. I hope you don't mind sleeping on a feather bed. We have no others; and Maureen is very proud of these. She has made most of them herself from her own goose-feathers. Have you all you want? I shall send some hot water. How different all this is from Minster!"

"I was thinking how lovely it all was," said Angela. "I don't know much about convents: but what I have seen of the house is exactly like what I imagine of a convent. It is all so clean and pure."

"A ruinous old pile. Yet the first evening I was at Minster the luxury there nearly broke my heart. Ah!"—there was a knock at the door—"it is Rose with some hot water. I told her not to forget it. We don't bother much about hot water here. In fact I don't believe we have a hot-water can in the house."

She poured the water into the basin from the broken-mouthed jug the maid had brought in, with an air of perfect unconsciousness, and handed back the jug to the black-haired Rose who stood wild and shy in the shadow of the doorway.

Angela unpacked for herself and made her toilet, only noticing delightedly that the glass was cracked all its way and reflected her with

a dolorous scar from brow to chin. Left to herself she discovered other things; that the floor in places was rotten as touchwood, that the windows rattled, that there was a stain of damp on the ceiling above her head, that there wasn't a whole chair in the room, that a pane of glass had gone and had been replaced by brown paper.

What matter! The fire on the hearth burnt brightly and sent its rosy light into every corner and under the tester of the huge bed. A bowl on the dressing-table was filled with primroses and wallflowers. There was a blue pot with sea-holly in it on the mantle-shelf against the little ancient French mirror. As for seats, why, one could always sit in the windows where the sills were so broad and low.

She dressed herself in her prettiest frock, a downy thing of white chiffon in which she looked white and soft as snow. She put on her necklace of pearls, her father's last birthday gift to her, and bound her soft hair with a fillet of pearls and turquoise set in silver, which was enchantingly fresh and girlish. She wanted to look her best to please Anne and do honour to old Madam and the Abbé and Witch's Castle.

When she descended only the old priest was in the room. He was standing with his back to the fire taking snuff. He set a chair for Angela and then stood looking at her with a fatherly smile, and tapping the lid of his snuff-box from time to time.

"When you talk to Madam, child," he said,

"remember that she is a little deaf, but she does not like to have it known. She will always say that the wind is rising when she has not caught what you said. As it happens, there is a great deal of wind on this coast. See there!" The wind cried in the chimney, and the flames of the candles shook in the draught. "So when she says that the wind is rising you can just repeat what you have said."

"Oh, thank you," said Angela. "I am so glad to know."

"She is a charming woman," went on the Abbé, "and she does not like to feel that her youth is left behind. I remember her in her hey-day. Ah well, she was very beautiful. Every one admired her, and she was just the least bit in the world spoilt. I never beat her at chess now if I can help it because it annoys her: yet one has to be careful, for it would annoy her much more if she thought you were not putting forth your best play against her. It spoils my play, and she will never play with finesse, never, never, she is too rash, too impulsive. She has flung the chess-men on the floor when I have questioned her play."

He lifted his hands with an expression of dismay which brought two tiny dimples in play into Angela's soft cheeks.

The door opened and a very young girl came into the room. She had a straight schoolgirl frock of white muslin with a scarlet sash, and there was a scarlet ribbon through her dark hair. She came in a little way and then stood still as

though she could come no further, as though at a breath she would fly like some wild, scared thing.

"Come in, little Judy, come in," said the Abbé. "This is only a child like yourself. You need not look so frightened."

He came forward and took the girl kindly by the hand, leading her towards the fireplace where Angela was standing.

"This little Judy would always run away if we would let her," he said. "She grows wilder and shyer when it is any one she does not know. But she will not be long afraid of you."

For a second Angela looked at the downcast eyes, the colour in the dark cheeks that was like the stain on a peach: she saw the breast flutter as though in fright. She put out her hand and took Judy's hand in her own. She thought that Judy was like the little mountain ponies they had seen yesterday, tiny, shaggy, bright-eyed creatures that were off at a breath.

Judy sent her a shy glance; then another. A light of reassurance came into her eyes. She smiled, looked pleased.

The old priest took snuff with great satisfaction.

Meantime Anne was assisting her grandmother to dress. Old Madam liked dainty, clever hands about her. She reminded Anne for the thousandth time of Justine—"Wickedly clever, my dear: she went off with every scrap of jewellery I possessed except what I was wearing, on the night of a Tuileries ball: luckily I was wearing my best. There was a married man too, a

barber person. They said the wife was very glad to get rid of him. Poor Justine!"

Anne had dressed Madam's hair as she liked it, piling it up in a stately mass of curls and ringlets. She had become expert in the art by long practice. The hair was so white and soft that it looked as if it had been powdered. Madam would have a little patch of rouge in each cheek. Her granddaughter knew her too well to protest.

"And now, what gown, Gran?"

"Why, the best my wardrobe possesses, to do honour to your friends." Anne looked pleased. "My grey silk watered in silver, with the rose point."

"You will look like a queen, Gran."

"And my tiara. No one will know that it is paste. It is the best of paste. I wept as I took out stone after stone when you were a child so that I might keep you with me."

"Dear Gran. I wish the day might come when I could replace those stones."

"Not those, child. They are scattered. But who knows what ship may be on the sea for us? Who knows when we may have news of Brian?"

Anne sighed. She had the habit of sighing whenever she thought of Brian. She did not realise that she was capable of being happy for quite long stretches of time without thinking of her long-lost lover.

"Everything would be different, Gran, if Brian were to come home."

"What a boy it was!" sighed the grandmother. "Do you remember, Nan, when he dipped the exciseman in the bog? It was only the Lord Lieutenant's friendship got him off that time. They had to give him a bath of poteen before the poor man came round."

"And they were the best of friends afterwards. And Brian wrote to the Commissioner recommending him for promotion. And when he was moved out of it got up a presentation to him of a silver-mounted Tantalus."

"Do you remember the time he rode Caubeen for the Mullinavat steeplechase because his friend Mick Spellissy had a sprained wrist, and he but sixteen, and came in first of a big field?"

The two women sighed together at these memories of a glorious past.

"Never mind, child: he'll come back one day. Brian would take a deal of killing. Tell me now, Nan, my girl, how do you live at all over there in England? There must be so little happening."

"There's plenty to interest you, Gran, once you get used to it. I thought at first I couldn't stand it, that my heart would break with the dullness of it, and the richness of it and the fat living. I used to hear the sea-wind sighing about my poor heart all day."

"Poor child, you should have come back to us."

"It's not in the blood to give in so easily as that, Gran. The money's useful, too."

"It comes in time to pay the interest on the

debt. I hope the people understand, Nan, my woman, what an honour you do them."

Anne smiled faintly.

"They are very good to me," she said. "I am practically mistress of the house."

"That is as it ought to be. The man seems a respectable, estimable sort of person."

Anne winced ever so slightly. She was thinking of Miss Angel.

"More to my mind than I could have believed possible of an Englishman of his class. He conducts himself very well, too. He really might quite well pass for a gentleman."

Anne winced more sharply.

"Dear Gran, he is a gentleman."

"Oh come, Nan, you're learning English ways. They tell me money will pass a man anywhere in England nowadays. You know, child, that a tradesman couldn't be a gentleman, though he might have excellent qualities, and we might for one reason or another consent to receive him on a social equality. I trust I know what is due to my granddaughter's—employer."

Madam brought out the word with a wry mouth.

Anne's laugh would have amazed the Duchess. There was amusement in it, but there was also something a little hurt.

"What a crusted conservative you are, Gran!" she said.

"You won't change me, my dear," said the old lady. She was standing up now before the long swing glass surveying with satisfaction the

magnificent little figure she presented. "Oh no, Nan, child. We may be very polite to, and considerate of, those who are not our social equals. In fact we are bound to be that as a matter of good breeding, to say nothing of religion. But as I said to Lady Finvarra when she asked me to meet those Jew people,—‘My dear, we must draw the line somewhere, and personally I prefer to draw it at the millionaire.’ What did I care about their titles and their houses in Park Lane? You will never make a radical of me nor make me believe that the old blood counts for nothing. Oh no, no, Nan. This Mr Corbett is a very respectable and very estimable person: but a gentleman, oh no, no: a gentleman is not made in a generation, my dear Nan. And if you are going to forget an old tradition so far as to maintain anything else, I shall really be sorry that I was over-persuaded by the Duchess to let you go."

"Dear Gran," said Anne, rather alarmed. She wanted Madam to be in her most gracious mood, in which she could be very gracious indeed. "I don't forget my traditions. I should be the last in the world to forget them. Only,—there is something I must tell you about Mr Corbett. It makes all the difference where he is concerned. Not now: it is quite a long story, and I hear the bell. To-night when I help you off with your gown."

"Very well then: I shall expect to hear it. I thought indeed he had a superior air."

Anne wondered what it was Gran expected

to hear. However, the promised story had quite the effect of turning the old lady's thoughts from her momentary grievance. Her manner to Mr Corbett at the dinner-table was exquisite. Gracious, but not over-gracious as Anne had feared it might be

And Mr Corbett enjoyed his dinner immensely. He had not his daughter's sense of the delightful incongruity between the rare old china plates and the barefoot serving-maid. He was only conscious that the brown trout was done to a turn and the lean chickens deliciously tender. The journey had made him hungry, and the simple meal with its excellent bottle of claret seemed to him as good as the world could supply.

Anne watched him as he sat, his courteous head inclined to old Madam, who chattered through the meal more than all the rest of the party put together. She was conscious of a certain pride in his comporting himself so well.

"Ah, but he is a gentleman," she said to herself; "and Gran would not take long to acknowledge it. If he had not been a gentleman would he have loved Angel Sachevarell? Would she have died with her hand in his?"

CHAPTER XIX.

YOUNG LOVE.

No one could have accused Willie Armytage of being a disconsolate lover in his lady's absence. Indeed it would be hard to imagine curly-pated Willie as disconsolate under any circumstances. He had bidden Angela good-bye with the utmost cheerfulness. There could be no question of his accompanying the party on the Irish trip since he had an examination just about the time they started, and he did not suggest that he should overtake them. Mr Corbett watched the young fellow with some wonder on the day of their departure. It was not his idea of how a lover should comport himself—but since Angela seemed satisfied, no one else had cause to complain.

A triumphant telegram reached them when they were at Dublin :

“Passed, with honours.”

“Ah, good lad, good lad,” said Mr Corbett. “He has really been working. Do you think, Angela, that he might be asked to join us by way of reward?”

"If you wish, papa," said Angela, faintly smiling.

"It is for you to wish, little girl."

Angela hesitated.

"I'm afraid there is not very much accommodation at Witch's Castle," she said. "Perhaps we ought not to add to our numbers."

"I had not thought of that," said Mr Corbett, with a repentant air. "Probably you are right, Angela."

Fairglen, the house of the Reuben Armytages, was situated on a height quite three miles from the town of Elsdon. Although it was on a height it lay, as its name suggested, in a little glen or ravine which set it out of sight of Elsdon smoke. From the upper windows one looked quite across the reek of the manufacturing town to clear country beyond, and even the tops of the chimneys were almost hidden in the tangle of trees that lay between Fairglen and Elsdon.

The river that ran sluggishly and foully through Elsdon was in the upper valley a thing of translucent purity, with water-lilies and swans in the quiet reaches of it, and long stretches of solitude where it flowed, full of light and shadow, under the arches the trees made for it.

Mrs Reuben Armytage was a gentle Quaker body to whom the young Corbetts were all much attached. She was as different from her aspiring sister-in-law, Mrs James, as possible: and Fairglen was a place of delightful childish

memories to the children who had played there. It was quite a simple and homely place, an old house, among trees, yet full of sunshine, where the old servants were unchanged year after year, and there was never an addition to the solid early Victorian furniture. The house rambled considerably, a house of many passages, with a couple of steps going up to this room, a couple of others descending to that. The rooms were all clean, cheerful and fragrant. Mrs James might turn up her nose at the huge round mahogany table in the drawing-room, with its circle of books, the children's school prizes, going round it like a wheel, at the Brussels carpet, and the knitted woollen antimacassars, and the dark red moreen window curtains. For all their unlovely furnishing, the rooms had something that Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street could not provide.

There was "Mother's Room" where the children had come from time immemorial with their hurts of mind and body. If Mrs James had only known, her own Miriam had brought there her shrinking aversion to a marriage her mother had desired to forward, and had had the wisest and tenderest counsel. For the young Corbetts Mrs Reuben had an immense pity. They were always "motherless bairns" to her, and would be, as such, creatures to win a double share of love and consideration if John Corbett were ten times as wealthy and as important a person as he was. It was true that there was something at Fairglen which

Minster despite its beauty and splendour lacked, which perhaps accounted for the great affection in which the young Corbetts held the place.

Mrs Reuben had gladly taken charge of Hetty and Arthur while Mr Corbett and Angela were in Ireland. Arthur was going up to Oxford in the autumn, having taken a scholarship at the extremely efficient school to which his father had sent him, a school at which the Duchess had not been able to turn up her nose, although she was a bit piqued that John Corbett would not take her advice and make it Harrow or Eton.

Arthur looked after himself, and a good deal after Miriam Armytage as well. Poor Miriam was in disgrace since she had said no to her mother's choice for her, a disgrace so complete that Mrs James did not express, as she would have done another time, her amazement at her daughter's predilection for any one so dowdy as Mrs Reuben.

Miriam and Arthur seemed quite satisfied with each other. It was rather a joke to the lively young Armytages, because their friendship seemed of such a very quiet, not to say silent nature. They would sit half the day in a boat on the river, pulled in under the over-hanging trees, Arthur reading poetry aloud sometimes, at other times smoking innumerable cigarettes and saying nothing at all; or they would pass hours at the piano, Miriam playing and singing, Arthur sitting and watching her face. They never seemed to have any need for society other than their own.



"What is Quietism?" Anne Daly had asked the Duchess of St Kilda one day.

"Upon my word I don't know, my dear. I think it's some kind of a heresy. You'd better ask the parson or write to your Abbé. What can you want to know for?"

"I've been thinking about that little girl, Miriam Armytage. She seems to me a Quietest saint. Did you ever see anything like the depth of her eyes, and the sweetness of her mouth when she sits there silent, hour after hour? No wonder that boy Arthur is in love with her. I should like to be a Quietest myself. How did she come to be Mrs James's daughter?"

"I was afraid Arthur was going to have an attachment for you."

"He has," answered Anne, looking proud and pleased. "He would do anything in the world for me. But he is in love with Miriam, and the love will grow. There is plenty of time for its growth."

A few days after Hetty had come to Fairglen Willie came down from London, very much pleased with himself, and demanding a great deal of petting from every one because he had done so well.

Hetty had been out of sorts. For some months past Mrs Reuben had watched Hetty whenever she was under her eye as she might have watched an ailing child of her own. Hetty was languid, did not join in the easy jests and laughter, refused expeditions with the youngsters which she had been used to enjoy, hung

about Mrs Reuben as a sick child might who needed mother-comfort.

Willie would not hear of this malingering in his old playmate. The weather happened to be beautiful, clear, radiant cool weather such as comes sometimes with a north-west wind, between Easter and Whitsuntide. It was an ideal time for outdoor expeditions, and Willie was not going to take them alone, nor to be relegated altogether to the society of the children.

He caught up Hetty into the round of picnics and gipsy teas and fishing expeditions and what not. His manner was perfect to her, a mixture of brotherly kindness and carefulness with little tender rallying ways. Hetty began to bloom fitfully, to be very gay at times, at others inexplicably dull. Mrs Reuben watched her with puzzled anxious eyes.

"Take care of her, Willie," she said to her son. "Things are not quite right with the child. Don't let her over-tire herself."

"Is it Hetty?" asked Willie in stupefaction. "Why, Hetty was always the little strong brown pony. Hetty delicate! If it were Angela now!"

All the same his way with Hetty was changed. He would heap up cushions for her where she could sit and rest, while he lay at her feet along the mosses white with saxifrage and wood-sorrel, and chattered of himself and his concerns with a happy confidence that Hetty would be interested.

Hetty had been lackadaisical of late. There came a subtle alteration in her. She seemed to brace herself up, to think of her frocks and her hair and her hats, which she had been neglecting.

"Mother," said Willie one day, when Hetty had worn a pink cambric frock, and a brown straw hat with a pink lining to the brim, "have you noticed how very pretty Hetty has become? Some people might think her prettier than Angela."

"But not you, my dear boy," his mother said, smiling fondly at him.

"Not me, of course. I'm always a True Blue Angela person. Still Hetty is wonderfully pretty."

It came to the last day of Willie's holiday. He was going to work with a coach in London. When he had gone the gaiety of Fairglen was sensibly diminished. The children returned to their outdoor occupations. They had become furious gardeners, carpenters, collectors, all manner of things: such tastes were fostered at Fairglen. Miriam and Arthur were as usual together.

"I don't believe any one misses the dear boy as I do, except perhaps little Hetty," said the mother, for whom a palpable joy and sunshine were gone out of the house with her boy. "Except little Hetty. But where is Hetty? Perhaps she will walk with me to see Mrs Starling and her new baby."

Hetty was in none of the usual places. At last Mrs Reuben climbed the stairs to the quaint room

under the sloping roof which Hetty had always had when she visited Fairglen. The door, giving on the twisted staircase, was slightly ajar; the lock was rather defective. She looked through the chink and saw Hetty on her knees by her bed, lying so quietly with her face pressed in the counterpane that she might have been asleep.

Mrs Reuben turned and stole away softly. It was something in which she could not reach the girl. But a great rush of motherly love swept over the kind heart. She would have given anything to have taken the motherless girl in her arms and comforted her.

Instead she went into her own room and shut the door. "Lord guide us! Help the child in her difficulty!" she said, kneeling down.

Hetty came to dinner much as usual, only looking a little pale. In one cheek a red spot burned. It was where Willie had kissed her when they had said good-bye.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MATCH-MAKER.

THE Corbetts had been a week at Witch's Castle and had seen the sights of the country-side, which were mostly of the natural order. They had attended a horse-fair, and Mr Corbett had bought a pair of ponies for Angela, wild, bright-eyed creatures, calculated to tread the edge of a precipice to a nicety without the slightest danger of going over. They had seen an Irish race-meeting with its characteristic humours, the tents and the dancing and the Aunt Sallys, the groups of country people with their rickety outside cars, the primitive ring, the couple of rustic-looking bookmakers, the tiny stand. Only the racing was something to win admiration from one who had seen many big races won and lost, and who was stirred to enthusiasm by the steeplechasing.

They had driven to the race-course on the outside car which was apparently the only equipage Witch's Castle afforded. But arrived there the party had been taken possession of by the occupants of a coach which towered above its neighbours and was tooled by Lord Finvarra, the Lord Lieutenant of the county.

"There's plenty of room for you, Madam, and for Nan and her friends," Lady Finvarra, a charming brunette, called down to them from her altitude. "Wait a minute, Madam. Ted will get down and help you to climb up."

But old Madam was up like a girl, and sitting with her race-glasses at her eyes by the time Mr Corbett had followed soberly.

"I told you we were different," said Anne at his ear. "In England she would be sitting in the chimney corner knitting stockings for the poor, like your own dear old mother."

"I can see Colleen, Nan," cried the old lady in high excitement. "There she is being led out. Her jockey is in white with green hoops and a green cap: it's Ned Lysaght is riding her. Lady Finvarra says she has put every penny she can raise on her."

"I reared Colleen," said Anne, standing tall and graceful by the Englishman's side. "It nearly broke my heart when I had to sell her."

He turned and looked at her suddenly.

"You are a horsewoman, of course?" he said.

"I never remember the time I was not," she answered.

"You might have had a horse at any time," he said. "I keep a horse for Angela, but she will not ride. There are always half-a-dozen saddle-horses in Minster stables. I haven't much time for riding myself."

A light sprang up in her eye.

"I should have loved it," she said; "but—it would hardly have been becoming."

"I did not think you subscribed to the conventions, Miss Daly."

"No woman can altogether afford to disregard them," she answered.

The Duchess had been right when, a little while before this, she had remarked of Anne that she was growing more flexible. She was a far less difficult person than she had been when first she had set foot in Minster.

"You need not be any longer so proud with us," he said, with one of his serious smiles.

"I am not proud now," she answered softly.

Angela was laughing merrily at some jest of young Denis O'Kelly, Lord Finvarra's younger brother, who was chattering to her with irresistible boyish impudence.

"She seems to enjoy herself," nodded her father.

"I am proud of both of you," said Anne. "You seem to accept the life so thoroughly."

"Did you think we would not?"

"I could not have thought you would be so elastic."

"We are less unbending than we seem, we English. It is the mistake you make to take the superficial view of us."

"Will you, like a dear man," said Madam,—she had quite ceased to think of John Corbett as a person in trade,—“will you, like a dear man, take this five shillings and put it on Colleen for me? That gentleman over there, the quiet one, not the one with the scarlet hat, will take it from you. Paddy Gleeson is his name. Many's the pound I've won and lost with Paddy."

Anne smiled at Mr Corbett. He took the money and vanished down the side of the coach.

"He might have offered to put on a five-pound note for you," said Lady Finvarra.

"If he had I'd never have forgiven him," said the old lady.

"Ah, but you see, he didn't offer," said Anne.

Lady Finvarra looked at her curiously. A minute later when Mr Corbett had returned, and was standing again by Anne's side, she stooped and whispered an inquiry into the old lady's ear as to whether Anne still looked for her cousin Brian's return.

"To be sure she does," snapped the old lady. "To be sure we all do."

"She is very patient," said Lady Finvarra; and then changed the conversation to a low-spoken commendation of the English visitors.

"They're delightful people," said the old lady. "If they weren't they shouldn't have had my Nan."

"To hear her, Teddy," said Lady Finvarra to her husband afterwards, "to hear her you'd think she owned those Corbetts, root and branch. Yet a little while ago she was lamenting that poor Nan must eat their bread. Myself, I think that some bread has not only butter to both sides of it, but very choice jam as well. If I were Nan I'd marry the Englishman."

"I always understood Anne was engaged . . ."

"To that great silly boy Brian. He never appreciated her or he wouldn't have left her to hunt up apocryphal riches somewhere or other.

It was after enjoyment he was. And it is of a piece with his conduct that he should drop out of the world and never send a word to Nan to say where he had gone to."

"If he'd dropped out of the world I don't see how he could," said Lord Finvarra.

"You're very stupid, Fin," said the lady calmly. "I can only say that I wouldn't have been so faithful."

"You wouldn't have been allowed to be," her lord said complacently; "there was too big a field after you. That was why I never dared take my eyes off you."

"Fin, you're a wretch. As though I ever looked at any of them! Why, you might have been lost as long as Brian and you would still have found me waiting for you."

"I thought I was taking you at your word, my dear."

"A woman's word," said Lady Finvarra contemptuously. "As though that ought to be taken."

"I didn't take yours any way, Peg, when you used to tell me that I was the last person you'd think of marrying."

"You might have believed me then. It was true for me. It was only when I found what an uncommonly useful man you were with the hounds that I changed my mind. You remember the day you dragged me from between Rory's feet."

"With his hoofs within a half-inch of your cheek. Shall I ever forget it? Good God, the

anguish I felt till I had you clear of him! If he had kicked!"

"Rory knew better."

"Ah yes, good beast, we shall remember it to him as long as he lives."

"Ted, I am going to call on Madam and her guests to-morrow. I've taken a fancy to the Englishman."

"I should have thought he was too steady for you, Peg."

"Not for myself. I like scatterbrains. Did you see how Anne looked at him? As though she liked him very much."

"You are romancing, little woman."

"I won't have Anne sacrificed to old Madam's folly. It is Madam who keeps up the old foolishness about Brian."

"Sure, Peg? I should have thought Nan was just the girl to do it off her own bat."

"Making herself a sort of Hindoo widow," said Lady Finvarra disgustedly.

"Come, come, Peg, we don't know that Brian is dead. I don't believe myself he is. He wasn't the fellow to be snuffed out easily."

"If he isn't dead then he ought to be. I should think it the most disgraceful thing I ever heard of if Brian Daly were to return to life."

"Don't be too hard upon the poor fellow. I wouldn't wish for a better companion than Brian, a good sportsman, a decent fellow all round. I wish I could shake him by the hand this minute."

"I'm surprised at you, Fin, or should be if

I didn't know the ways of men. After his dishonourable, disgraceful, unfeeling conduct!"

"Come, come, Peg. Wasn't it last week you said you had a *gra* for Brian?"

"My dear man, don't you see that a week may alter many things?"

"I see that you're match-making, like any foolish woman of them all."

"Don't be rude, Fin."

"And wanting to send Anne out of the country too, to marry her to an Englishman. A glorious girl like Anne. It oughtn't to be allowed. There should be a law against it. The Englishman's a decent fellow, but, hang it all, not good enough for Anne."

"You're jealous, Fin. I don't forget you were in love with Anne before you were in love with me."

"Yet I went down before you the first minute I saw you walking across the turnips like a goddess, the day we were shooting partridges in Tom Carey's field, and never thought of another woman afterwards. A nice dance you led me. No, Peggy, I'm not jealous of Anne. But Brian was my old friend. Hang it all! I don't see myself helping his sweetheart to marry another man, and he an Englishman."

"Well, don't be bothering me about it, Fin. I had no idea I was provoking so much discussion. And all I can say is that if you're not in love with Anne now, and I really believe you have the bad taste not to be, then it's no credit to your taste."

The Witch's Castle party did dine at Finvarra, where Angela and her father were as much delighted with the great, stately, tapestry-hung rooms as they had been in another way with Witch's Castle.

Lady Finvarra was graciousness itself to Mr Corbett and his daughter. Indeed, when after dinner she flung a lace scarf about her head and shoulders, and took John Corbett for a walk on the terrace, whence he might see the long expanse of bog-land and mountain glimmering in a light between moonlight and afterglow, stretching away to the sea, her absence was quite a prolonged one.

Old Madam fidgeted a little. She was waiting for the Englishman to take a hand at whist with herself and the Abbé and Dr Glenn. Finvarra was entertaining the two younger ladies.

"If I were you, Finvarra," she called out at last, "I wouldn't have my wife turning that man's head. It's too good a head to be turned; but Peggy will never leave off her old ways; you spoil her, Finvarra."

Lord Finvarra looked towards the waiting card-table with a laugh.

"I'd take her ladyship a shawl, or a warm wrap of some kind anyhow," put in Dr Glenn. "The evenings have a way of turning chilly after the sun goes down. The grass had hoar frost on it this morning for all that we're within a hen's race of May."

The suggestion was enough for Lord Finvarra. He got up with some alarm and went out to the

terrace, returning in a few minutes, holding his wife's hand in his own.

"She's as cold as a frog," he said. "Yet she didn't want to come in. I had to mention the doctor's orders, Glenn."

"Ah, come over here, Mr Corbett," said Madam, "and take a hand. We've been waiting for you this half-hour. Who deals? The highest trump takes it."

"Upon my word, Fin, I could have shaken you," said his wife when their guests had departed. "You came at such an interesting moment. He's really a most fascinating person. I don't mind his having money. I think it's awfully nice to know some one who has money and doesn't swagger about it. They're really thoroughly well-bred, both father and daughter. Our own peasants couldn't be better. You know he was born a peasant. He told me all about it. And would you believe it? He hasn't heard a word about Brian."

"Why should he," asked Lord Finvarra obtusely.

"Why should he? I'd like to know what else has made the whole subject of our conversation."

Lord Finvarra looked bewildered, and his eyes took on the expression of a person who tries to remember something but cannot.

"We talked a lot about ourselves," he said.

"There, go on, you great stupid!" his wife said, giving him an affectionate push. "I was almost at the point of telling him about Brian ;

and then I checked myself. I was so glad I didn't blurt it out."

"Why?" asked Lord Finvarra. "If you thought the poor beggar was likely to fall in love with Anne he ought to know what every one in the county knows. I shall mention it casually the first time I see him."

"If you do," said Lady Finvarra, "I'll just box your ears for you."

CHAPTER XXI

THE LONELY PRIEST.

THE poverty of the district about Witch's Castle, such as he had never known, affected Mr Corbett's heart and conscience to the uttermost degree. There were days when Angela and Judy entertained each other, when he and Anne walked alone to the places where poverty showed itself in its direst aspect. There was for instance that village at the foot of the great mountains where the bog-land met the sea, indistinguishable huts of mud and blackened thatch which at a little distance looked like a colony of ancient straw hives, rotting from exposure to the weather, and long empty of their industrious inhabitants. Village was a misnomer for the place: it was something in the wilderness, lost, decayed, forgotten, with none of the cheerfulness and noise usually associated with the name of village.

The people were squatters who had been evicted during some old land war, and had neither the hope nor the energy to make a fresh start for themselves. The very name of the place was despairing. Hungry Foreland it had been called from time immemorial. The well-fed, well-clad,

well-housed visitor from the other world found the air of Hungry Foreland bracing. Not so the wretched inhabitants, who, living in the midst of damp and rottenness, on potatoes and Indian meal, and not too much of these things, were nearly all tuberculous.

Men and women coughed, haggard and wretched. The men bent their long, emaciated frames over the few potato ridges or drills of oats which they had managed to snatch from the bog and the sea. The women held miserable babies inside their thin shawls to breasts incapable of nourishing them. Little children crept in and out the wretched cabins, with pale peaked faces showing through the grime, quiet with an unnatural quiet, their little bodies showing all the signs of semi-starvation.

"We do all we can," said Anne, throwing out her hands with a moan of pity, "but it is just to keep them alive. We are so poor ourselves. And what is there for them, only the work-house? This is No-Man's Land: they are No-Man's People, except perhaps Father MacInerney's—ah, yes, and Dr Glenn's. There is Father MacInerney; he will tell you about them."

A solitary, tall young figure was coming towards them across the bog-lands, leaping pools and other impediments easily in its progress. A young collie, lean as himself, followed at the priest's heels.

Father MacInerney was a dark, sad-looking, handsome young man, with the soft gloom one

often sees in Celtic faces overlying his. His smile was awkward and sweet. He carried a big stick, and he was wearing a cassock which was unsuited to his big strides. He was bare-headed, and the wind had ruffled his fine, light brown hair. He shook hands with Anne.

"I heard ye were here," he said, "so I came as I was lest I should miss ye."

"I'm very glad you did," said Anne. "I want to introduce Mr Corbett, Father MacInerney. Mr Corbett is troubled about the state of the people here. He has been nursing Biddy Doyle's Owney, showing him his watch for the last half-hour, and he has scattered money in the cabins. They can't believe in their good fortune. None of them yet know what to do with it."

She pointed to a huddled little group of women with shawls over their heads, and children clinging to their skirts, who were gazing after them.

"I could tell you a lot about them," said Father MacInerney. "But we can't stand here in the middle of the bog. It's nearly one o'clock, and I was going to have my dinner when I saw ye from the window. By the greatest of good luck I've got a bit of mutton. I'll be proud of your company."

Mr Corbett and Anne looked at each other.

"We'll come, with pleasure," said Anne. "I told Gran we'd hardly be back for lunch, and she gave us some sandwiches. Maureen made them. They were fine plentiful ones; they'll make quite a banquet for Moll Malone's children."

They strolled back over the bog-land talking,

the collie keeping close to his master's side. Mr Corbett admired him and the young priest looked pleased.

"He's the only companion I have," he said. "There's no one to talk to within six Irish miles, and I've to do them on foot. Only for Keeper here I sometimes think I'd die of the loneliness. Most of the poor people have only the Irish, and indeed they're so poor that it's poor work talking to them."

He bustled about setting chairs for them when he reached his house. It had three rooms and had been originally an ordinary peasant's cabin; but it had been slated and whitewashed, and some of the holes in the clay floor had been filled in.

"It gets very soft still in damp weather," said Father MacInerney with his slow deprecating smile.

The floor was below the level of the ground outside. They entered by the kitchen where the piece of mutton was turning leisurely on a string of yarn. The priest's sitting-room opened from the kitchen: beyond it was his modest bedroom. There were a few religious prints on the walls, a bookcase filled with books of a professional kind. On the round table in the centre of the room lay a copy of 'The Daily Telegraph' a week old.

"You see we're not quite out of the world," said Father MacInerney, indicating the newspaper with shy pride.

He went off to fetch the decanter and glasses

which are always produced in an Irish house immediately a guest comes in.

"What a delightful fellow!" said Mr Corbett, "and what hospitality!"

"'Tis a red-letter day to him," said Anne. "He's the loneliest man alive. His six-mile-off neighbour, Father Kelly, is very old and very deaf. Why, you could travel Donegal—I had almost said Ireland—from end to end and never pay a hotel bill. The lonely priests would jump at entertaining you. Not that there's not hospitality at the back of it. They may say what they like about our priests. They are our one really Irish institution. England has never touched them. It would be a sad country without them. They'd share their last crust with you, and do it with such good-humour that you'd forget it wasn't a banquet."

Mr Corbett smiled at her enthusiasm.

"What would the people do without them?" she went on. "They have never lost their opportunity as we, the gentlefolk, have. They are everything to their people, father and mother and sister and brother. If they ever pull the curb too tight it is a discipline of love. They are so human, sharing our joys as well as our sorrows, as gay at a feast as they are pitiful and helpful at a cold fireside. If I needed persuasion they would persuade me of the truth of the religion which has produced such a body of men."

The priest came back, his face radiant. He was carrying a tray awkwardly. Upon it were

a couple of decanters, glasses, and a plate of cake.

"By the greatest of good luck," he said, "my mother sent me a cake the other day, and I'd saved a bit of it. I thought I'd better fetch the things myself, for Honor's a bit cranky this morning. But she's delighted that I have visitors. She is indeed; and as pleased as possible to wait on you, Miss Daly."

"Hum," said Anne, "I suppose you've been doing something very bad from Honor's point of view. Giving the blankets off your bed again? They were Gran's present, too, I think."

Father MacInerney blushed.

"Indeed, I'm very sorry. They went some time ago, Miss Daly. They were beautiful blankets. I couldn't leave the mother and child cold, could I? Still Honor takes it to heart. She's a good sort, Honor, a very good sort and kind. She thinks too much about my comfort. You won't tell Madam, will you?"

The mutton came in done to a turn, though indeed if it had not been, the visitors were too hungry to have complained. Father MacInerney carved, with a beaming face. Honor, a shrewd, capable-looking old peasant-woman, with a red shawl round her shoulders and a big coarse apron over her short woollen petticoat, waited on them and made signs at Anne behind the priest's back, uplifted eyes and hands, head-shakes, which greatly amused Mr Corbett.

"I shall hear all about your iniquities presently, Father," said Anne, laughing, when Honor had

taken the dish away. "I can see that you're very much in Honor's black-books."

"She often seems hard-hearted to the creatures," said Father MacInerney, "but she's not really so. It is her devotion to me."

"It's a good thing you have her to look after you," said Anne, "for you'd leave yourself nothing."

"True for you, Miss Anne," said the priest amiably. "I'd be very badly off without Honor."

It was again a new Anne who presented herself to John Corbett. Why, how many new views he had had of her since coming to Ireland, and yet he would have said while they were in England that there was only one Anne.

Now he blushed for his presumption, watching her face as they sat after dinner. There was a tumbler of steaming punch before her. Mr Corbett knew by this time that it was the hospitable refreshment of the country-side. She had only stipulated that it should be weak and sweet. Anne and punch; there was something humorous in the conjunction. But Anne sipped at her tumbler not at all as though it were the first time she had done such a thing.

"You might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb," said Father MacInerney, beaming more than ever. "It's a great honour and pleasure to receive ye. Let me send for Bartle Conway's outside car and drive ye to the Caves of Dooras. After that, come back with me to dinner—it'll be my supper and your dinner—and

I'll drive ye home later. There's a telegraph office in Ballyknock this side of Dooras. You could let the Madam know. They won't be wanting your company as badly at Witch's Castle as I do. Sure I sometimes find myself talking out loud to myself when I get tired of Keeper not answering me. It's mad they'll be calling me one of these days."

He poured out the speech eagerly, almost as though he feared a refusal and wanted to say all that could be said in favour of his plan before he could be damped by a negative.

Anne's face was full of kindness as she turned to Mr Corbett.

"I should like to stay if you would," she said, "and I can telegraph to Gran. There'll be a new moon to-night, and it will be a lovely drive home."

"We'll be back at five for dinner," said Father MacInerney, rubbing his hands. "And after the cloth's removed we'll have a game of cards. Play cards is it? There isn't a pluckier player in the four provinces than Miss Daly. The way she holds up the Five is a beautiful thing. 'If you can't win the game spoil it'—that's her sheet-anchor. She plays for the board not for herself."

"I didn't know you played cards," said Mr Corbett, turning to Anne. "I've only seen you play chess and dominoes and draughts."

"'Tis the Abbé's fault," said Father MacInerney. "God forgive him, he's more like a Frenchman than an Irishman. He was badly brought up:

he'll let his punch grow cold in his tumbler, and he'll only play cards with you from politeness, and that's a poor motive. The *petit verre*, as he calls it, is the only thing I ever knew him to touch."

He was still shaking his head over the Abbé when Bartle Conway's outside car rattled up to the door. Father MacInerney himself drove, and was untiring in pointing out to the visitors the beauties of the country through which they passed: and the desolation and magnificence of bog and mountain were as beautiful as the exquisite gorge they found on the side of the mountain, which was filled in with trees in all the beauty of their young spring colours, and seamed with little singing rivulets running over orange and rust-coloured channels.

When ascending the gorge they walked, and while the priest went by the horse's head, the other two fell behind.

There had been a good deal of serious talk during the drive. The thoughtful Englishman had listened fascinated to the story of a people whose lives were so austere and innocent that from a professional point of view they somewhat disappointed their pastor, much as a sound body lacks interest for a physician.

"I don't get a mortal sin in a twelvemonth," he had said, "and as for a reserved case, why, there was never such a thing heard of in the parish. It 'ud break my heart to part with them, yet 'tis often I wish I was in a slum of London where I could have a wrestling match with

the Devil. He never comes our way at all here, and they can save their souls without me. I'd like to do some work before I die."

His hands worked with nervous energy and his face seemed to become lean and eager as he said the words.

"It is quite true," Anne said. "We are a crimeless county. Donegal is primitive without savagery. You have only to look at their faces, the austere faces of classic regularity. And their tall figures! Donegal of the Strangers—from the look of the people I should say the Strangers were princes."

"I thought them very handsome as they straightened themselves from their field-labour to look at us as we passed by."

"Ah, you noticed it; they have the look of dignity, of pride and nobility. It is a county of gentlepeople."

They visited the caves, with their basaltic columns chiselled to the likeness of shrines and temples. The wind cried and the sea sang in the caves as though hands were below the organ-pipes of stone. At last Father MacInerney carried them off hastily. The sea had a way of rising suddenly into these caves and drowning the unwary person caught within.

"I shall remember this for many a day," said the priest when the delightful day was over and the travellers were seated on the outside car with Bartle Conway himself in the driving seat.

"I hope we shall meet again, sir, who knows?"

I might be in your Black Country yet. I shouldn't mind a little work among the black souls. And I'll tell you what,—if you want to know the rights and wrongs of things here you'd better go to Tom Glenn. The doctor knows as much as any man, and he'll respect your motives. He'll know you don't come out of curiosity or to make a stalking-horse of us for some reason of your own. We can't afford to refuse friendship, but we like to know it's fairly come by."

"Neither shall I forget the day nor your hospitality," said John Corbett gratefully, "nor the things you have told me, the things I have seen for myself. I'm not impertinent enough to bring you pity, and sentiment is not in my way. But I have a sort of national conscience; and after all, we're all children of Adam."

"I wish some of us would remember the cousinship," said the priest with a smile of wistful humour that soon passed.

They left him standing there in the bright moonlight, his young brown head bared, his cassock flapping in the wind. As the smile faded from his face it took on the old aspect of soft, wild gloom. His hand rested on the dog's head, as though he drew his one companion to him for comfort. It struck home to the not easily impressed Englishman.

"How lonely he looks," he said to Anne, as the figure grew dimmer and dimmer.

"He was one of a large family," she replied, "and the mother's boy. So I've heard. They

are comfortable, middle-class people in Dublin who lead quite a gay kind of life. He has been here seven years."

"But he will not always be here?"

"I don't know that. White-headed curates are not uncommon, and Father Pat's bit of money makes him suitable for the place which pays few dues as you can well imagine. The mother wants him in Dublin, but he won't second her; perhaps he couldn't bear it. I've heard it nearly broke his heart to leave her. But what a gossip I am! He wouldn't be obliged to me; and it's lucky Bartle is as deaf as a post."

"He helps me to understand," Mr Corbett said simply.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DISPENSARY DOCTOR.

WITH Dr Tom Glenn Mr Corbett was already acquainted, and had received a cordial invitation to visit him.

"Come over any morning at all about ten o'clock and make my round with me. It's a long round. Only an Irish dispensary doctor and an Irish mare could stand it. We're expected to have the constitution of a coal-heaver and the knowledge of a college professor for a hundred and twenty pounds a year. As you can imagine, it's for love we do it, and we couldn't afford to take the situation unless we'd a bit of our own."

"I should like to come very much," said Mr Corbett; "I don't come as a sight-seer, you know."

"To be sure you don't. If you did you'd find Tom Glenn giving you the cold shoulder. 'Tis annoyed I am when people come wirras-thruin' over us. As though we didn't only want a fair chance to be as well off as the best of them. And sure there are worse things than poverty."

A few days later, when he knew the ladies had other matters to attend to, he bethought himself of Dr Glenn, and started off after breakfast to walk the long mile that lay between Witch's Castle and the village where Dr Glenn had his house.

It was a radiant morning, the sea below the sea-road blue as the sky overhead, its sapphire ever deepening till it disappeared on the horizon into a line of glory.

The west wind blew the spray in his face. It was hard not to be exhilarated, and this morning of early May John Corbett felt the unexhausted youth in him, the youth which had held ideals and kept its gold unspent rioting in his veins. He had to remind himself a little sharply that he was a middle-aged man with marriageable children, and that the one romance of his life was over and done with long ago.

He reached the doctor's little whitewashed house about ten o'clock. Breakfast at Witch's Castle was early, because the Abbé rose early in order to say his Mass at the church in the nearest village. Dr Glenn came out to meet him with both hands extended in welcome.

"Upon my word, you'll teach us business habits," he said. "I was out half the night with a case beyond on the hill there, and am only now sitting down to my breakfast. You'll have a cup of tea with me, do: you can take it after your early start."

Mr Corbett followed the doctor into the

house, and to the little parlour, spotlessly neat and prim, where a breakfast-table was set and a lady in a widow's cap sat behind the tea-pot. He had to look twice at her before he could be sure that she was, as he had heard, quite blind. She looked towards them with such bright intelligence, her air was so perfectly competent and efficient.

"This is Mrs Glenn, Mr Corbett," the doctor said, leading him up to the lady; "not, as you might suppose, my wife, but my mother. She sees more with her fingers and her ears than we do with our eyes. This mother is a very remarkable person. She'd know if there was a bit of dust on the chimney-piece the minute she came into the room. It's rather uncanny of her, and it keeps the servants in order more than the attentions of all the seeing mistresses."

"I'm glad to meet you, sir," said Mrs Glenn, with the softest tenderest blush rising in her unwithered cheek. "You mustn't mind this boy of mine. He talks a deal of nonsense, and thinks far too much of his old mother. You'll have a cup of tea, sir?"

"Do," said the doctor again. "and a couple of new-laid eggs, and a slice of bacon. You will? Now that's downright decent of you. If you hadn't consented I'd have had to bring out the decanter; and as a medical man I don't approve of whisky before twelve o'clock."

Mr Corbett laughed.

"That is a generously early hour," he said.

"Do you really approve of it at twelve o'clock?"

The doctor looked at him with a humorous sharpness.

"Now, don't tell me," he said, "that one of your nostrums for us is that we should give up drinking whisky. The climate would never stand it; and upon my word a teetotal Ireland would be a sad sort of place. Man for man ye drink more of it in England and yet ye prosper."

"I've no theories at all on the subject," said John Corbett. "Only if people had rational pleasures and were well fed there'd be less reason for getting drunk."

"Ye've got at the half of it now," said the doctor approvingly. "But not at the whole of it. Do ye know where the regeneration of Ireland really lies?"

"Home Rule?"

"Pure whisky. I see a stream of it flowing through Ireland and the people prosperous and happy. It's the bad whisky does the mischief."

"I never know when Tom's joking and when he's not," put in Mrs Glenn in maternal protest.

"Nor never will, ma'am. How can ye when ye think of me still as a small rogueen of a boy with a head of golden curls, and for ever growing out of my breeches? But this is no joke. We've no use for temperance societies, as teetotal societies, at all. Sure, the world 'ud be a cold place without a glass of punch. Many's the cold

it saves when three hundred and twelve days out of the three hundred and sixty-five you come in wet to the skin. Let the temperance societies resolve themselves into societies for the promotion of pure whisky and I'll have hopes of them. You remember, mother, what Patsy Duigenan said to Dean Morris when the Dean tried to make him take the pledge—"Look at me," said the Dean, "hale and hearty at eighty, and I never touched whisky in my life." "If you had had your glass like a man," said Paddy, "you'd be a hundred, so you would."

"Tom was always such a boy for a joke," said Mrs Glenn, while Mr Corbett laughed.

"He has to be," said the doctor. "It 'ud never do to give the blue devils a hold these times. I'm going to bring a wife home to you one of these days, ma'am. That'll be the primest of jokes."

"Indeed, I wish you would, child," said the mother. "'Tis glad I'd be to sit in the chimney corner if she was managing, and if she wasn't I'd be proud to keep the house for her."

"I'll be thinking about it," said the doctor with a fond humorous glance at the blind face. "Ye'll have to pick her for me. 'Tis you that's the chief person to be consulted. Me! Not at all, ma'am. You've spoilt me to that extent 'tis a Turk I'd be to any unfortunate woman that took me."

"Don't mind him, Mr Corbett," said the mother in some anxiety. "He's good to all he touches. Ask old Patch there on the rug; ask

Peter, the cat; ask his mare, Kate. Ask the people."

"Sure, who's saying anything against me at all, you foolish woman?" said her son.

"He gives himself a bad name," said the mother in anxious persistency, "but every one that knows him knows better."

"Ask Biddy Cassidy," said the doctor grinning.

"What have you been doing to Biddy?" asked Mrs Glenn.

"Only that I ordered her mother a mustard plaster on Tuesday and left her the mustard and explained to her how to make it. And when I came back on Thursday it had never gone on at all, and the poor old woman was nearly smothered with bronchitis. So I never said a word, but I made the mustard plaster, and 'Now, Biddy,' I said, 'it's on your face you're going to get it instead of your mother's chest.' 'Glory be to goodness,' she said, 'an' the Lord betune us an' harm, what'll it do to me?' 'You'll have no more skin on your face than a skinned rabbit,' said I. She gave a scream that made all the hens fly up and down in the rafters, and out with her on to the bog-land. She'll do what I tell her the next time. Now it's time for us to be off. Perhaps I'll be fetching Mr Corbett back to dinner with me, so you'd better put your best foot foremost. Those chickens are rooting in your pansy-bed. You'd better kill a couple of them. And a pig's cheek on a bolster of cabbage on the same dish. There's a feast for the gods!"

As they climbed into the doctor's high dog-cart Mr Corbett's foot knocked against a box containing bottles.

"Guinness's stout," explained the doctor, "for a woman with a baby. Else she'll be nursing it on black tea. I was half in joke, half in earnest, when I talked about the whisky. The tea-pot's the enemy."

"The tea-pot!"

"We'll all be in the madhouse in about twenty years if all the tea-pots in the country aren't broken. I know the bad whisky does a deal of harm. There's an even worse little devil in the tea-pot that sits stewing in the ashes all day. Below in Letterkenny there's a lunatic asylum big enough for all Ireland. The tea-pot and consanguineous marriages. The wise Church sets her face against marriages of kin, but what are you to do when we've been intermarrying so long that we're all kin? There's very little whisky drunk here in Donegal; we're too poor to buy it, and we're queer mortified creatures; we've no stomach for it. But the little green devil of the tea-pot sits and grins on every hearth."

Now and again the doctor pulled up at a cabin and left Mr Corbett in charge of Kate.

"They wouldn't be obliged to me if I made a raree-show of them," he said, "especially in sickness. Perhaps they'll ask you in at some places. Ah, thank you. I think I could use a little of that welcome stuff among them. For the children and the mothers and the sick."

John Corbett had offered the money with a sensitive blush which drew the doctor's heart to him.

"It is so easy to do this kind of thing," he said apologetically. "It costs me nothing, and you must draw on me for all you will. I feel ---- that they ought not to be so poor. We are really at heart a responsible nation."

Presently at one house a young girl with eyes like brown salmon pools, and soft pale cheeks, came out and shyly invited Mr Corbett to 'come in and take a hate o' the fire' while the doctor was busy. He accepted the invitation and sat on a creepy stool by a turf fire while the doctor put a boy's broken leg in splints. The mother and grandmother stood by watching the operation, and a crowd of children blocked the doorway.

"Get out of this," shouted the doctor suddenly, "or I'll lay my whip about your shoulders. Do ye want to smother us, let alone taking the light away? Johnny Sheehan, if I catch ye I'll break every bone in your body."

John Corbett had arrived at an understanding of Irish ways with great quickness. The result of one of his observations was that the Irish used picturesque language. He sat smiling now at the contrast between Dr Glenn's deft, gentle actions and his lurid speech

"There now, Patsy," he was saying to the patient, "the worst of it is over. You've been a good boy not to squeal, and I'll give ye a penny to lay out at Margaret Doyle's on sugar-stick. I told ye what that twisted bough

would do for ye, but ye wouldn't mind me, ye young villain, and here ye are tied by the leg for maybe a couple of months. You'll know when I'm speaking to ye again that it's better for ye to be minding me."

At half-a-dozen houses after that Mr Corbett was spectator of Dr Glenn's methods.

"He's a terrible man," said a little wizened elderly man who stood by the mare's head when Mr Corbett had preceded the doctor out of one cabin. "Just listen to the langwidge of him. But sure, they know him, and they knows all the hardness of him is only from the tongue out. Did he tell you how he broke the little tay-pots? Aye, faith, smashed every wan in every house with his stick. Ye never heard sich wirrasthruin'. Ye'd think it was their hearts he'd broke, the most o' them, especially the women folk. But sure tay-pots is aisy got again."

"Do you see that island?" asked the doctor, pointing presently with his whip to where a pansy-dark mountain rose out of the sea. "That's Inismacsaggart. It's in my district. 'Tis no joke pulling over there in stormy weather. There's twenty different currents flowing in that channel."

"It ought to be bridged," said John Corbett. "It wouldn't cost us so much."

"Father Kelly's not the man to do it," said the doctor, shaking his head.

"Father Kelly?"

"Aye, indeed. He hasn't the wit of Father McKeevor in the next parish. You see that

island away ahead of ye. Ye might think it was diamonds and sapphires this minute, but it's only poor barren rock. It is Iniscolomb. The Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary together were doing the congested districts a couple of years ago. They slept the night at Father Hugh's. He has a lovely hand over a jug of punch. The two gentlemen enjoyed themselves. Well they might after driving fifty miles in a north-west wind. They said that Father Hugh ought to be the Pope at least, and that it was an English grievance that it was in Ireland he was. They nearly came to words over whether 'twas the Castle or the Chief Secretary's Lodge that should entertain Father Hugh in his next vacation. 'There's a bit of a causeway I want from ye,' said he. 'I'll maybe never see another holiday if I've to make sick calls to Iniscolomb by boat. 'Tis in danger of my life I am every time I cross.' They never asked a question about it, only looked at each other. 'We can't let Father McKeever drown,' said the Lord Lieutenant. 'I'm quite of your opinion,' said the Chief Secretary. The next morning the gentlemen sat making a good breakfast. There isn't a headache in a gallon of Father Hugh's punch. Not that I'm saying they'd had a gallon. Suddenly a brass band struck up outside, and there was the greatest cheering you ever heard, and the faces grinning in at the window, and the women lifting up their children to look at the two gentlemen. 'I'd no idea we were so popular,' said the Lord Lieutenant. 'How this warm-

hearted people are misrepresented!’ said the Chief Secretary. ‘’Tis a little address in Irish they want me to read to you,’ said Father Hugh after he’d opened the window. ‘’Tis all about the causeway to Iniscolomb. Ye’re the most popular man in the county to-day.’ ‘What causeway?’ they asked together. ‘Ah sure, the little bit of a bridge ye consented to build last night.’ ‘I don’t remember it,’ said the Lord Lieutenant, and there was a twinkle in his eye. ‘If it gets out, it will give a great handle to the enemy,’ said the Chief Secretary; and then they listened to the Gaelic address with the greatest of good-humour. You can see the bridge in the sun now. It might be a spider’s thread made of silver and hung with dewdrops, but ’tis only granite. My hand to you, Father Hugh, you’re a great man!’

He turned roguish eyes towards John Corbett’s appreciative face.

‘I’m glad that you’re not after saying that it was unfair of Father Hugh. Plenty of your countrymen would have said it. You must meet Father Hugh. He’s a grand pattern of the Irish soggarth. He was never done but once. That was one night when Mr Ryall, the parson, who is a great chum of his, had dinner with him, and the night proved too stormy for him to go home, so Father Hugh offered him half his bed. They dropped on their knees either side of the bed to say their prayers. Father Hugh said all his and maybe a trifle over. Then he lifted his head and there was Mr Ryall’s still buried in the quilt.

Poor Father Hugh was a bit stiff and cold, but said he to himself, 'Here goes; I can't be beaten by a Protestant!' and he started the prayers again. He got through his office for the next day: it was the next day by that time; and still there was the parson on his knees. Poor Father Hugh went back to it, though his knees were near broken by this time. Would you believe it that it was four o'clock in the morning when Mr Ryall lifted his head. 'Glory be to goodness,' says he, 'I fell asleep on my knees.' 'Ye bla'guard,' said Father Hugh, 'and was that what ye were keeping me out of my bed for that you might have your beauty-sleep out?' He could scarcely kneel down for a month, the poor man."

"I should certainly like to meet Father Hugh," said Mr Corbett.

"I turn in at this white gate," said the doctor. "Poor Katie Curran, far gone in consumption, poor child. There's only a little alleviation possible. But I must tell you what Father Hugh said to a Mr Morphew, who had no better manners than to tell Father Hugh that it was the Catholic Church was responsible for the misfortunes of Ireland. 'Tell me, now, Mr Morphew,' he says, and he looking as innocent as a baby, 'is Morphew the Protestant for Murphy?' The gentleman hadn't a word to say. He belonged to a family of the Murphys, and the youngest son had changed his religion and his name in the Penal days in order to get hold of the property. He's a great man, Father Hugh McKeavor is, entirely."

CHAPTER XXIII.

QUARANTINE.

It was only a few days later, and the party at Witch's Castle were still at breakfast when Dr Glenn was announced.

He followed close on Rose's heels and broke into her announcement of him. The pleasant rosy tints of his face had gone gray: sudden care sat upon his brow, gloom in his usually merry eyes. He took off his hat as he came in and wiped his forehead as though it had broken out in a cold sweat. He was plainly too troubled to think of the courtesies.

"What news?" asked Madam.

"Bad news," he said hoarsely. "They've got the typhus on Inismacsagart. I've been bothered about them for some days. There's a woman dead this morning, and they sent for me. Don't come near me, for I haven't had time to disinfect."

He stared at the faces round the breakfast-table which had suddenly grown pale.

"Good God," he said, "what am I to do? They can't be nursed there in their rotting cabins. There are no beds, no fires, no linen, not a basin

on the island. And how can I go back and forth with the things I want?"

"Bring them to the mainland," said Madam. "There is the schoolhouse. They shall have all this house contains that may be useful to them."

"I'd thought of it," he said, a clearer light breaking through the perplexity of his face. "The only thing was the immediate help. Every second they're there lessens their chances of recovery. I did it once alone when I was in the County Clare. But there it was nothing. The sea hadn't the currents that run between us and Inismacsagart. It was diphtheria there, the children dying like flies, and the women giving them hot tea for the sore throat. I carried boatloads of them across. It was the desolate spot, and no time to look for any one to help me. I was doctor, nurse, and grave-digger, as well as boatman, till the help came."

"I can take an oar," said John Corbett, standing up. "I row a good deal for health's sake on the river at home. It's not quite the same as salt water, of course. Still, I have rowed on the sea."

"Why, that is two of us," said the doctor more brightly.

"Three," said Anne. "You didn't suppose you were going to go without me."

"You!"

The exclamation broke from John Corbett, almost violent in its dismay and protest.

"I," Anne smiled, and as she stood up stretched her arms as though already she was pulling an

oar. "I've often rowed in that channel in worse weather than to-day ; ask the doctor."

"She will not be permitted to expose herself to such danger, Madam." He turned vehemently to the old lady.

"It is her duty to go if she is wanted," Madam said, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Miss Nan is as good as a man in the boat," said the doctor.

"As for contagion, you couldn't keep her away from them once they're here," said Madam. "After all, the way you die is nearly or quite as important as the way you live. I wouldn't have my girl a coward."

"I've sent to Mick Fannin, the Inspector of Constabulary, for help," went on Dr Glenn, losing his bewildered air. "Those fine fellows of his might as well be doing something more useful than turning the railway stations into beauty spots. But I don't know when they'll come, and we can't wait. I can depend on you, Madam, for some help this side?"

"Wasn't I through the famine?" asked Madam. "Didn't I help to lift the dead from the road where they'd fallen on their way to the relief? Didn't I see the ships laden with wheat sent out of Galway harbour when the people were dying for it? I was a girl of eighteen, and the famine sowed my hair with gray."

"I am coming too, of course," said the Abbé. "There's no strength in my old bones, but I'll be wanted. There's no priest nearer than four miles."

"The Inish 'll be black with them as soon as they know," said the doctor; "but that can't wait either, Abbé. We'll be glad to have you for a passenger."

Angela had been watching her father with dilated eyes. There was a great love between the father and daughter.

"You are going into that danger?" she said with a sharp catch of her breath.

"And you wouldn't keep him out of it if you could?" said Dr Glenn coaxingly, as though he talked to a sick child whom he wanted to swallow something bitter.

Her gaze travelled on to Anne.

"And are you going too?" she asked in a bewildered way.

"Why, to be sure, dear," said Anne cheerfully. "It's my manifest duty. They are my people. I've seen lots of sickness and I'm as strong as a horse. But you"—turning to John Corbett—"we will absolve you. They are not your people, and there are many things depending on you."

"All the children of Adam are my people," he replied. "I'm not as exclusive as you, Miss Daly. And I don't think that even the Abbé could absolve me. Angela will be brave. I know Angela. What are we to do with these children, Madam?"

Angela and Judy cried out with one voice to stay, but "No, no, no," said Madam. "We can't have our hearts wrung with the care of children other than the sick. Jane Kelly, Father

Kelly's niece, will take charge of you. I have only to send word to Jane. You had better both be quite out of the way of temptation, so you will go to Gweedore with Jane. Just at the end of the Glen there is an inn where they'll feed you and take care of you, good souls. Now no crying, no crying! Ye are to be good children."

Angela was not crying. She lifted a face startlingly like Miss Angel's to kiss her father, and let him go without a word. He looked down into her eyes. Her kiss had the anguish of parting in it.

"I am proud of my daughter," he said.

They carried a bale of blankets and some necessary things in the doctor's cart that was to take them to the boat. Through the narrow channel between the island and the mainland the water flowed like a mill-race. Short as the distance to be travelled was it took some stout rowing. The Abbé was at the tiller. Anne and John Corbett took the oars. The doctor with his medicine-chest between his feet was compounding something.

The sea was blue as a sapphire, dancing and sparkling in the sun. The mountain on the island was pansy-purple. The pigmy houses were like so many boulders. One might have supposed the place uninhabited except by gulls and gannets, that stood about the rocks and kept up a great clamour. There were about a dozen cabins altogether on the island, and there was sickness in almost every one of them. The men

were away in England at the hay harvest. There were only old people and women and children left to the fever.

"What is to become of the children?" asked John Corbett.

"When the sick are disposed of," said the doctor, "we shall have to think of them. I tried to separate them this morning when I found out what was the matter, but they would creep back to their mammies. There are some children sick. When we have carried the sick across we must find a place for them. There is an empty emergency barracks at the end of the island which I think we may make use of for them. It is a more comfortable place than they are accustomed to."

Very little more was said in the boat. Presently they drew it up on a small beach, facing a row of cabins ragged as a deserted rookery. John Corbett was out first and held his hand to Anne to assist her. As she took it she sent him a glance from her beautiful eyes that made his quiet middle-aged heart beat as it had not beaten since Miss Angel died. They stood an instant, side by side on the sunny beach, while the doctor collected his belongings. The Abbé, placing a purple stole, the insignia of his office, about his neck as he went, was slowly walking up the incline to the nearest cabin. One or two old men came out of the doors and down the beach to offer their services.

"We shall have some help," said Dr Glenn, beside them. "They will do anything but carry

the dead in their boats, for that would ruin their fishing." He was dragging out a bundle of bedding from the bottom of the boat as he spoke.

"I shall never forget it to you," said Anne in a low voice, while she and John Corbett waited for instructions.

"If I had not been willing," he answered,—
"I cannot imagine not having been willing,—I must have followed where you led."

He took the bedding in his arms as he spoke and carried it up towards the cottages, laying it down as he came near the low doors beyond which it was impossible to see anything for the obscurity and the smoke. The Abbé was already within the first one.

"He is wanted there more than I am," said the doctor, going on to the second. "Wait here, Mr Corbett, if you please. I shall call you when I need you. Miss Nan, I should stand as far away as possible. We don't want to expose you unnecessarily."

"So long as I'm not wanted, doctor," she answered cheerily, going farther off.

"Ah," said Mr Corbett to himself, "she is an example of the disciplined helper. She will not embarrass those whom she would help."

While he waited he watched her where she stood, tall and straight as a lance, by the boat and the blue waters. Presently a child, then another, stole down the beach towards her, an old woman followed, then two or three more. They wore a cowed, terrified look. The sickness

was a new, terrible thing to them. A little group gathered about her. She had a child in her arms. The women fell to chattering like the gulls.

John Corbett had known before what it was to pass through a deadly epidemic, but then there had been everything to fight it: here there was nothing. He had refused to leave Elsdon when the small-pox was there, though every one who could had fled. He had sent the children away and left Minster to the old servants, taking up his abode temporarily in the ascetic rooms that were furnished for the occasional convenience of the partners, at the top of the business premises. He had not been content to give money then: he had given personal service as well. To some one who had objected that his life was a valuable one to be put in peril, he replied that one could die only once, and the important thing was to die worthily; which saying had made some of the shrewd business men of Elsdon shake their heads over him. John Corbett must have a screw loose, they felt, or he would have recognised that the important thing was to postpone dying as long as possible, to die only when life had lost all possible savour.

Dr Glenn reappeared in the door of the cabin, took a sheet from the bundle of bed-clothing and went within again. A minute or two later he signed to John Corbett to come and bring with him the mattress which was part of the bundle. He could hardly see anything passing within from the brilliant daylight outside, and he was half suffocated by the turf-smoke

and the evil atmosphere that it but partially covered. Presently he made out on a heap of straw by the wall something that moaned and tossed incessantly. The something had a smaller creature upon its skinny arm. He laid the mattress as the doctor directed him; watched silently, ready to lend a hand, while the patient was quietly slipped from the bed on to the strong sheet and the mattress; helped to lay the mattress on the few planks of a rotten boat which the doctor had seized to make his ambulance, and then took the foot of the mattress while the doctor took the head, and carried it out.

Anne waited for them by the boat-side. When they had laid down the mattress with the sick woman in the bottom of the boat she leant over it, and then looked at the doctor with a startled air. He came in answer and looked at the face of the baby who lay within the sick woman's arm.

"Let her keep it," he said. "It will do her no harm. Poor mite! We can take it from her when we reach the mainland."

So they set out, with a dead and a living passenger.

They made the trip half-a-dozen times, and as many times carried the sick to the temporary hospital where Madam and her helpers were ready to receive them. Anne was beginning to look very white, despite her proud spirit, when they were relieved by the arrival of three or four big constabulary men. The doctor's

messenger had carried word of his need to his friend the Inspector over the mountain, and this was the answer.

Dr Glenn drew a deep breath when the green uniforms came in sight.

"These lads have attended ambulance classes," he said. "'Twas a fad of Mick Fannin. Take her away, Mr Corbett, sir. She's a heroine, but she's only a woman after all. I recommend you both a boiling hot bath, with a disinfectant in it. You'll get the disinfectant if you call at the dispensary on your way home. And then a good meal and to bed."

"But yourself, doctor?" said John Corbett.

"I've got to see this through. Never mind me. I'll get home and to a bath as soon as I can manage it."

"He'll go on till he drops," said Anne, as she and John Corbett walked home together. Instinctively they walked apart as though each might communicate infection to the other. "If the Victoria Cross were given to doctors that little man should have it."

"If it were given to women——" said John Corbett, with eyes of reverence.

"Gran ought to have it," she concluded for him lightly. "She has fought so many epidemics, so many famines. No one would think seeing her so cheerful and indomitable how she has taken their sufferings to heart. Perhaps I ought to go back to her presently to see if I am wanted."

"They must find some one else," said John

Corbett. "You have done enough, too much for any mortal woman."

Sudden tears of weakness swam into her eyes. She tried to conceal them, holding out her hands for his inspection, with a smile. There were great weals and marks on them where she had held the oar.

"Glorious wounds!" he said, and his eyes said more than the words. They looked as though Miss Angel herself had leant to him out of the clouds.

"I see I shall have to prolong my holidays," he said, and smiled.

"We shall have to keep quarantine at Witch's Castle," she answered.

Was there something of exaltation in both their voices, as though it were a pleasant thing to take the risk of the fever?

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NECKLACE.

NEVER was wooing, if wooing it was, done amid such strange surroundings. For a few days there was nothing but the hospital work to be thought of. They went on till they were dazed and blind with fatigue, helping the doctor, who seemed superhuman in his energy as he was in his good-will. The epidemic had practically laid hold upon every one of the islanders. Even reinforced by Mick Fannin's boys,—and the Inspector left glens of mountain-sheep and miles of desolate bog-land unpoliced in order that his boys might help,—they were not enough, seeing that all the appliances were wanting.

However that was only for a few days. After that doctors and nurses, who had volunteered for the post of danger, came down from Dublin, and they were free of the hospital. But still the Abbé came and went. Witch's Castle that had smelt only of the sea, now reeked with disinfectants. The talk was all of sick folk, how this one was dying and Dr Glenn had great hopes of that one, and how yet another had been hastily buried at dawn.

There was enough to do still at the improvised crèche on the island, where the children who had yet shown no sign of illness were gathered together, crying for the homeliness of the smoky cabins and mammy's breast. They had found a comfortable, motherly peasant woman to put in charge, and in a very little while their own mothers would not have known the babies, so fat and clean and well-dressed were they. There was plenty of money now for everything, money given unobtrusively, with a request that it should be used without any mention of the donor.

"They must never go back," said Anne one day, looking around the circle of golden heads with a proud face. "The cabins must be razed to the ground."

"Is there a landlord?" John Corbett asked quietly.

"A very old, very eccentric maiden lady who lives in Dublin. She never comes here, but some one collects the rents for her. I don't suppose they amount to fifty pounds in the year."

A few days later he informed the circle at Witch's Castle that he had acquired the island of Inismacsaggart.

"I have for some time had a fancy for being an Irish landed proprietor," he said, with that gravely humorous smile which had made Madam declare that he must have had an Irish grandmother.

With money and good-will everything is

possible. Within a few days the island resounded with the noise of the masons' and the carpenters' tools. The new landlord had decided to remove the village to quite the other side of the island. The old village was to be pulled down, and the débris carted into the sea or burnt. John Corbett superintended the work of rebuilding with as much interest as though he had never handled bigger affairs.

"I am having a long rest from Armytage, Armytage and Corbett's," he said. "I must find some occupation for my business energies, else they will rust."

He had called to the crèche for Anne, and had found her sitting on the floor with riotous babies clambering over her, and her hair all about her shoulders. She had jumped up, laughing and blushing, in a delightful shyness which he had never seen in Anne before, and, twisting up the long coils of her hair, had alternately reproached the children and sent him dazzling glances of deprecation through the silken masses she was trying to get into order.

He wanted her advice about something at the cottages.

"Being English," he had said with a humility that pleased Anne, "I am afraid I may go wrong. I look to you to keep me right."

"Not too fine," said Anne. "No, I think, no scullery sinks. They wouldn't know anything about them, and they'd only be sources of danger. Just plain cottages with light and ventilation and good flooring and walls, and a

fine coat of thatch on top of them. And yes, just the open hearth they're used to; and a hook for the pot."

"Tell me," she said one day. "What kind of a bargain did you make with Miss Lawlor?"

Miss Lawlor was the former landlady of Inismacsaggart.

His eyes twinkled.

"My men of business, who dealt with her through their Dublin representatives, tell me that she asked and got something exorbitant. I had told them to do it quickly no matter what it cost. I am going to see Miss Lawlor when I am out of quarantine. She must be worth seeing judging by the letters of the Dublin solicitors to my men."

"How good you are!" said Anne. "I used to think money a contemptible thing, but I don't think it so now that I know how it can be used in the hands of a good man."

He blushed boyishly.

"I don't know that I deserve much credit," he said soberly. "I did it at least as much to gratify myself as for . . . better things. I did it . . . in fact for you."

Anne's sudden burning blush amazed him. Her cheeks had been wont to keep their creamy coolness for him. She put up her hand nervously and fingered a long chain which she wore about her neck and which he had hardly ever seen her without, the pretty thing with heart-shaped stones of opal, closely following each other. The pendant was a round watch-shaped locket with

a beautiful enamel centre and a circlet of old paste.

Another man would have spoken then, but John Corbett thought not at all of his wealth and position and Anne's poverty, only of his middle-age, his grown-up children, and the sprinkle of gray in his hair. He was quite conscious that Anne was becoming to him what Miss Angel had been, not pushing that gentle ghost out, but rather assuming her lineaments, taking her shape, recompensing him for the love he had lost. But he was a devout and humble lover; he was not sure that his lady was going to lean to him, and become mere woman for him as Dian had done for the young shepherd.

They had nearly forgotten now the first fear with which they had watched each other's faces for a sign of the fever. Apparently it had passed them by, and the outbreak was, Dr Glenn assured them, well in hand. The hay-harvesters would come back to Inismacsaggart, many of them to find themselves without the woman or the child they had left behind; but there were no more cases, the disease was being stamped out.

There was one of the young nurses who had come down from Dublin in whose praise Dr Glenn was lavish. Dr Glenn had not resigned his command to any of the fine Dublin gentlemen who had come upon the scene.

"Here have I," he said, "been waiting for an opportunity all my life to distinguish myself, and

do ye suppose I'm going to have it taken out of my mouth the first time it occurs? Do ye think I've no women-folk to be proud of me?"

As a matter of fact Dr Glenn's fame had spread among places and people that had never before heard of Inismacsagart. The London newspapers had begun to refer to him as the Inismacsagart hero, a title which alternately made him comically indignant and tolerantly amused.

"The old mother swallows every word of it," he said, "and so for the matter o' that does Sister Mary. 'Tis she is the hero if you like. She's an angel to them, that's what she is."

Now that the work grew slacker they often met the nurses out for a spin in the sea wind. Anne had taken a great fancy to Sister Mary's plain, freckled, angular, sweet face. She used to come along with her blue cloak flapping in the wind, something like a tall, lean, rather ungainly boy, Anne used to think, but with that soul of goodness shining out of her face that made her beautiful.

"I want to see more of Sister Mary as soon as everything is all right again," she said to Dr Glenn. "Though goodness knows when my employer"—Anne's eyes danced with fun—"will give me a holiday again."

So it had actually come to that that Anne's dependent state should be a matter of jest to her, to John Corbett also, who received his title with quiet appreciation. This new, bewildering, delightful Anne filled him with an amazed joy.

Could he ever have imagined the transplanted Anne to be a creature like this on her own soil? And would it all pass away like a dream once the quarantine was over and they were back in Smokeshire? Would she again be the stately Anne, the big, innocent, unworldly Anne of the impossible pride, and with the limited sense of humour, as he had once presumptuously thought?

"Indeed then," said Dr Glenn, and his dancing eyes softened, his merry face became suddenly thoughtful and tender, "'tis myself is ready to help you to an opportunity, Miss Nan. I haven't had time to say a word to her, the creature, but I sometimes think by her way to me that she has a kindness for me. 'Tis myself would like to be looking after her a bit, and fattening her up and taking care of her; and the old mother would be wild with delight."

Anne seized both his hands and shook them with effusion.

"I am delighted," she said. "I know she's as good as gold. It's in her dear face. And you deserve to have her."

"I'm afraid then I don't," said Dr Glenn. "But sure if we all only got what we deserved, Miss Nan, there'd be few men married."

It was a few days after this that Lady Finvarra imparted to her husband her discovery that Anne had given up wearing her chain and pendant.

"And what she means by it is what bothers me, Fin. She's too straight not to have a straight motive about it: and my own opinion

is that she has given up wearing it because in her inner heart of hearts she has discovered that it was all nonsense about Brian."

"Pooh!" said Lord Finvarra, at least he came as near as possible to saying 'Pooh!' "The catch is broken or something."

"I wonder why I ever married a man with so little imagination," said Lady Finvarra. "Anyhow I'm going to ask Anne."

"I'd rather walk up to the muzzle of a gun than do it myself," said Finvarra. "Women are audacious enough for anything."

"You're absurdly afraid of Anne, Finvarra, just because she was the goddess of your young dreams. Anne won't snub me."

Lady Finvarra made her opportunity. It was after a quiet dinner. They were necessarily quiet, for as they had all come and gone to the Inish they were all still secluded from their fellow-creatures, for mere precaution's sake. She had Anne to herself in her boudoir.

"Where's the necklace, Anne?" she blurted out suddenly. She wouldn't have acknowledged for words that she was a little bit afraid and that that was why she rushed on the attack. "Where is the necklace, and where is Brian's picture with the very blue eyes, and the lock of his hair?"

Anne did not answer her for a minute. She stood tall in her white gown, turning white and red, with her eyes on the ground at her feet.

"Like an adorable big child," said Lady Finvarra afterwards, describing it for Fin. "Yet

Anne must be well over thirty, Fin. She was older than you when you fell in love with her, and you are no chicken."

Then she lifted her violet eyes and looked straight into Lady Finvarra's friendly brown eyes.

"Perhaps, Peggy," she said, "Brian is never coming back. Perhaps indeed that is the thing Gran and I ought to have made up our minds to. Could Brian be alive, and never send us a word all those years?"

"If he could," said Lady Finvarra vindictively, "he would deserve to be shown the door, not to have necklaces worn for him."

"I thought," said Anne looking at her, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, yet her eyes frank and her lips set to speak the truth, "that it was time for me to assume that Brian was not coming. It will be a blow to Gran, . . . but . . ."

"My dear, every one said you ought not to have been tied," broke out Lady Finvarra impetuously. "It was always cruelty to a beautiful young woman. Now that it may be cruelty to some one else. . . ."

She kissed Anne.

"We won't say another word about it," she said; and to give her her due she did not reveal the whole of the conversation even to Lord Finvarra, greatly to his relief. The good gentleman was always protesting to his Peggy that she must not betray her friends' secrets, and was uneasy under her feminine sophistry that

since they were one what was told to one must be the property of the other.

The exquisite time went on, that blossom time of the year which comes between Easter and Whitsuntide, with masses of fleecy clouds in the high sky, a cloud of daisies on the earth, the birds singing in full rapture, and the whole green world as fresh as though it had just come from the hand of the Maker. Whitsuntide passed, and the imploring letters from Angela and Judy grew more and more persistent. Armytage, Armytage and Corbett clamoured for the return of the junior partner.

"This time of quarantine," said Mr Corbett to Anne, "has been a green spot in my life. Quarantine does not usually spell Paradise."

She turned his speech aside. She had put away Brian's locket and Brian's ring, but the habit of many years is not dropped in a day. She wanted time: like many another woman before her she wanted time. It is always the woman who cries "Slowly, slowly," and the man who says "Hasten, hasten"; that is if the man is in love.

The day came when Judy and Angela came back, when once more Witch's Castle smelt of nothing but sea-wind, when all the bog-land and mountain and sea were bathed in clean, shining beauty as though disease and death were not in the world.

The two girls had become close friends in their isolation and the fear that bound them together.

"Let us ask Madam if we may take Judy

back with us," whispered Angela, clinging to her father.

Madam heard and consented. There were still one or two fever cases in the temporary hospital with Sister Mary in charge. Perhaps little Judy was better away for some time to come.

It came to their last night at Witch's Castle. There was a sadness which at first every one strove against, but at last yielded to as inevitable.

"To-morrow night," said Madam, "the Abbé and I will be alone. It is very sad for the old when the young go away. Not but what the Abbé has the advantage of me in age." She bowed to the Abbé in her most gracious manner and flirted her fan.

"The age of a priest can't matter," she went on. "The age of a woman . . . why, a woman should never have any age."

Mr Corbett bent over and laid his hand on hers like a son.

"They shall come back whenever you say the word," he said. "At a moment's notice, if the loneliness becomes too sad, they will return."

"We shall keep each other company, the Abbé and I," said Madam, more bright-eyed, more indomitable than ever. "I shall not send for them, oh no, not before it is time for them to come. After all I am not old nor infirm."

But to Anne when at last they were alone she made her retraction concerning John Corbett.

"To think that I should ever have said he wasn't a gentleman," she said.

And Anne was thinking of the desolation with which she had left Witch's Castle less than a year ago, of how the prospect then, of having little Judy with her and gathering the little black head to her lonely breast whenever the pangs of exile became too intolerable, would have seemed. Now, Witch's Castle was no less dear: but it was true that Minster was no more the dreaded place. She wondered how she could ever have so contemned the beautiful old house, over which the shade of Angel Sachevarell seemed to her fancy now to lean benignantly.

CHAPTER XXV.

SUDDEN LOVE.

THEY were back again at Minster, and the family once more gathered together. The children seemed as if they could never make enough of their father, of Angela and their dear Miss Daly. To-morrow John Corbett would be caught into business cares once more. To-day he contemplated nothing more than a flying visit to Elsdon to see the partners and learn what had been doing in his absence.

They were home but twelve hours, and already an envelope bearing the postmark of Ballincrusheen lay on Anne's plate at the breakfast-table. She turned it over curiously.

"Not Gran," she said. It seemed quite natural now to think aloud to this home-like breakfast-table. "The writing seems familiar. Ah, I know. It is the doctor's. I have seen it on a prescription. It is an apology for not coming to see us off as he promised, nor even to say good-bye."

As she read her face changed. Quick dismay and grief came down on the eyes that the rains of Ireland seemed to have washed bluer.

"It is Nurse Mary," she said, addressing herself to John Corbett and Angela as much as to Judy. Why, they were nearly as much interested in the affairs of that little corner of the North-West as Anne was herself. "It is Nurse Mary. She has taken the fever."

"Ah! poor fellow!" said John Corbett. "What does he say?"

"He is quite brave and hopeful," answered Anne, with a little catch in her throat.

She passed over a few paragraphs of the letter, feeling that they were for her eyes alone. Then she began to read.

"I have taken her home: it is her home however things go; and the mother is helping to nurse her. We are doing it together. A friend of mine takes my duty, and I hardly leave her bedside. The hospital is empty now. More than any one else she has helped to send them home healed to the fine new start in life Mr Corbett, God bless him, has given them. Tell him they are praying for him at Hungry Foreland, for what he did for them. She'd send you her love if she could. As soon as there's a bit of good news I'll let you know. The Lord wouldn't take her from me and the old mother now, and leave me a widower all my days surely."

It was a cloud on their home-coming. Anne had dashed off a passionate message of prayer and grief to Dr Glenn, and had taken Judy with her to post it. They came in together to find that the Duchess and her nephew had come to pay them an afternoon visit.

"Smokeshire has been empty without you, Anne Daly, you ungrateful girl," she said, taking Anne into a warm embrace. "Mrs Perkins has been going about wilted. Even Matilda Packington misses you. As for this bad boy of mine, he's simply swallowed up in working-men. He says there's no one else in the county worth speaking to."

Anne looked at Lord Godfrey Ingestre with a smile. He was apparently not heeding his aunt. He was staring with all his eyes at Judy, who was standing shyly in the shelter of tall Anne. Judy was wearing a homespun frock of brilliant scarlet. Her little head was like the black silk corona of a poppy. The scarlet seemed to repeat itself softly in her lips and her cheeks. Of her eyes you could see nothing. The black lashes that rested on her cheeks covered them.

Anne drew her forward.

"I have brought back a little cousin with me," she said. "My Cousin Judy, Duchess. She is dreadfully shy."

As soon as she could escape Judy crept away into the quietest corner of the room. It happened to be the corner where Angela presided over the tea-cups. Judy was quite at home with all the Corbett family. They caused her no embarrassment now. It was another matter with this strange young man who looked so big and shapeless, yet so handsome in his rough clothes. Although Judy's lashes were so thick and so persistently down she had received a vivid impression of his handsome head, set on the great

neck which the absence of collar revealed, of the thick locks flung backward, of the eager quixotic face, the gray quixotic eyes.

She crept close to Angela, who in a frock of pale green linen, a delightful fabric she had discovered in Ireland, looked like a snowdrop. But the young man's gaze followed her; presently the young man followed his gaze. The children clustered about him. He was *persona grata* with the children. He talked with them without condescension, on equal terms. He never interfered with their privileges. He did not attempt now to carry the tea or the tea-cakes since it was something the children liked to do. All the time he stared at Judy like a man fascinated.

Meanwhile the two friends were isolated on their distant sofa.

"I am a new woman, Anne," said the Duchess. "No, I don't mean that I wear the garments Lady Harthill approves of, nor write improper stories, nor even play golf and put my fellow-creatures' lives in peril as is the way of lady-golfers. Godfrey has made me a new woman in another sense. I used to have a vague fancy for him because he reminded me ever so slightly of my Noël. Now the likeness comes out every hour of every day. He is Alured's son and Grace's son of the body; he is my son of the heart. They have all but cast him off for his odd opinions. Parents will do such things, my dear. Alas, the parents whose children are spared to them! He is worth a thousand of Greville, their eldest, a starched prig whom they

adore, and Compton, and all the others put together. He is a big, generous, foolish boy, with impracticable ideas, and that good-looking head of his packed as full of brains as it will hold. I'm not only a bereaved mother, Anne, but I am the mother of a living son: and it does no wrong to Noël. Godfrey would never tell me, but I know he loves me better than his own mother. He will have all my savings even if he builds Utopia with them."

Anne looked at her friend with eyes that were as good as an embrace.

"I think he's a dear fellow," she said. "He will grow out of his queernesses."

The Duchess gave a little half-stifled laugh.

"Do you know, I'm not sure I want him to?" she said with enjoyment. "I think he's just unique as he is. I sometimes visit him at the works. I love to come in and watch him before he has discovered me, shining with sweat and grease,—am I very coarse, dear?—and black as a navvy, and so happy among all his machinery. I've begun to have Saturday afternoons in the gardens to please him."

"Saturday afternoons!" Anne repeated.

"For his friends, the working-men and their wives and children. It's surprising how well-mannered the creatures are. I'll tell you what, Anne; you needn't swagger so much over the good manners of your peasantry. It has come upon me as a discovery that our people are charmingly well-mannered. It is the upper middle-class gives us our bad name. I was

afraid the servants would have given notice at first. But Godfrey can wind them round his little finger. You must come one Saturday afternoon, Anne, and help to entertain them. You will be perfectly at home."

"I shall love it," said Anne, with sincerity.

"I'm disappointed about Angela," went on the Duchess, leaning to Anne in a confidential manner. "I mean about the effect of her on Godfrey. He thought her very angelic-looking, but I could see he was indifferent. I did hope Angela might have brought him back to evening clothes and collars. That is a mission his wife will find herself called upon to perform."

"Perhaps Angela would not be equal to it," said Anne, laughing.

The Duchess looked at her keenly.

"What has come to you, Anne Daly?" she asked. "I used to think you an unhumorous person."

"Perhaps I've been learning it in England," said Anne demurely. "Perhaps I haven't been able to display it in England. There aren't the same chances."

"Oh, that is it," said the Duchess good-humouredly. "It's like the manners: you judge us by our villa-folk. Look at our humorous literature."

"I acknowledge it," said Anne handsomely. "Only why are your villa-folk so immensely preponderating?"

"We couldn't do without them. They're our mainstay. But you're changed, Anne. I don't

know what has come to you. You are less—insular. It's what you are fond of calling us; but it is no less true of yourselves."

What threatened to become a discussion on the differences between peoples was averted. The Duchess suddenly lifted her lorgnette and stared through it.

"I should like to know, Anne," she said, "why my nephew is staring at the little black-headed girl. Not but what she's pretty enough to stare at. But I don't want him to stare at any one but Angela."

"I'm sure Judy doesn't like it," said Anne. "I was just thinking I ought to go and rescue her."

"It is rather rude of Godfrey. I don't suppose he knows he is doing it. After all she is a very pretty child. I suppose a young man ought to be excused for staring at her. Still I think I'd better take him away. I've missed you so, Anne. I've wanted to tell you how happy the boy has made me. Hence our descent on you this very first afternoon. You'll have Mrs Perkins post-haste, and Lady Packington and all the rest. When do you dine with us? Monday? But you will come sooner than that to lunch with me alone. Friday? Yes, that will do. You dear creature, I haven't half said my say."

The Duchess was evidently distracted from the matter in hand. She caught up her nephew imperiously and swept him off with her, to the grief of the children who had been clamouring

to carry him off to the schoolroom where there were ever so many disabled toys wanting wheels and such things which only his clever fingers could fit on.

"Another time, another time!" she said. "It's not every afternoon I get him to make calls with me. This is only a special concession."

As the landau rolled off she turned in an uneasy way to her nephew.

"Didn't Angela please your artistic eye?" she asked. "That green frock with her nimbus of hair?"

"I didn't notice Miss Angela, ma'am," he said bluntly. "I thought the little Irish girl the most beautiful thing I ever saw."

"Godfrey!"

His eyes met hers and hers quailed before him.

"I shall marry her if she will have me," he said. "And I think she will have me."

"I meant something quite different for you," said the Duchess lamely.

"I wouldn't disappoint you lightly," he said,—and his eyes were like a son's, "but she has done for me. I never cared for a girl before. It must be fate. Don't let it come between us."

The Duchess burst into tears. Then she turned to her nephew in the carriage and hugged him, to the amazement of the footman who happened to be looking that way.

"I can't let anything come between us," she said. "It is for you to dictate terms."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ARCHANGELS.

HILARY VALLANCE came and went as he would. When he had undertaken to paint the ceiling of the chapel he had expressly stipulated with Mr Corbett that he should have his own time.

"I couldn't say what day the wander-fit might seize me," he said, laughing, "and I shall have to go. I am a thorough vagabond, not like you, sir. I can't answer for myself, especially at this time of year:

"The heavenly weather's call! O, who alive
Hastes not to start, delays not to arrive?"

"Perhaps I know it better than you think, my lad," said John Corbett. "And you are certainly free to take your time, to go and come as you will."

He was away on one of his roaming expeditions when they returned, and in the general rush of the day following Angela had not a minute of time to see the paintings which had taken hold of her mind in an odd way.

Minster was a delightful place to come home

to, and Angela felt the keenest joy and pride in seeing it again. It lay in the full golden light of the June afternoon of which there were yet a couple of hours before sunset. All the gardens were emerald-green with their parterres of flowers gay in the smooth turf. The air was sweet with roses and honeysuckles. The old house lay basking in the warm sun. She wondered, with a sudden rush of love for the place, how she had been content to stay away so long from it. She could hardly content herself in the hands of her maid while she did her hair and put on her simple dinner-frock.

"Why, what has happened to you, Miss Angela?" asked Ellis, who had come as children's maid when Angela was about eight, and was on terms of affectionate familiarity with her young mistress. "You're that wrigglesome. You're more like Miss Hilda than like a grown-up young lady."

"I want to get out, Ellis. I want to see what has been happening all these ages. To think we have missed May at Minster: and that all the apple-blossom is over, even if roses and pinks are come. I want to see Mrs Mason and every one. Do hurry up, Ellis. I'm sure that will do very nicely."

"Seeing as how young Mr Armytage is coming to dinner this evening, it would become you, Miss Angela, to let me do your hair as pretty as I can."

Angela laughed, escaped at last from Ellis's hands, ran down the corridor and the wide stairs, and flitted out into the sunlight.

There was no one in sight, except a solitary gardener's boy rolling a grassy terrace. There was so much to see she hardly knew where to begin. A couple of dogs followed at her heels as she passed through the opening in the yew hedge that faced the hall-door into the garden where the shades were deep beyond the magnificent yews. She smelt a rose here and there as she went, and stood a few seconds by the fish pond to watch the gold-fish swimming in its clear depths. She turned aside into the hothouse, heavy with scents. She went on through the kitchen-garden, pausing to pick a few cherries from a bough that bobbed its fruit against her lips.

At last she took the way that brought her out opposite the door of the chapel. She had wanted all day to see how far Mr Vallance had progressed with his angels. A little flush came in her cheek. She knew she would see herself in some of those golden-headed, rosy-fleshed children, with the wings of Paradise. She did not acknowledge to herself that the thing she had most desired to see, when she wriggled under Ellis's hands, was the roof of the chapel. Indeed, as she stood at the half-open door, she hesitated, made as though she would turn back, finally passed timidly inside.

For a minute or two she could see nothing. The windows were filled with stained glass which admitted only a dim religious light—except when the morning sun was full upon the front. The only light now was from the rose-window above

the altar, and that was glowing like a jewel with the western sky behind it.

Presently she lifted her eyes, and having become used to the dimness, saw the altered aspect of the ceiling. Mr Vallance had not been idle. He had treated the ceiling as the sky, with the faces of angels, the heads and shoulders and arms and wings of angels, looking through the rosy and golden clouds.

She looked about her with delight. On the wall, close at hand, she saw the solitary figure of an angel, a St Michael, in armour, a sword in his hand.

"You like it, I hope?" said a voice close by her. "It is the first of the Archangels. I am going to paint in so many panels, Archangels, Angels, Principalities, Powers. I wish that anywhere might be found space for Lucifer, Star of the Morning, for his name's sake."

Angela turned and met Mr Vallance's eyes.

"Where did you spring from?" she asked. "We heard you were away."

"I was on that raised platform over there," he answered, indicating a dim corner by the altar. "I returned this afternoon. When I saw you come in, and stand looking up, I thought at first you were one of my models. I assure you I did, and was so startled that I nearly stepped backward off the platform."

"I hope not," she said, and turned a little pale.

"Forget it," he said quickly. "I don't suppose I should have been very much hurt even if I had. The platform is not more than

eight feet high. And my angels,—what do you think of them? I have wondered so often what you would think of them."

He looked anxiously at her, and she turned away her eyes. Somehow the old ease of intimacy seemed gone. It was no longer the sick youth whom their horses' feet had wounded, but a singularly handsome young man, with a grave and distinguished air, who looked at Angela as though she had been one of his models.

"I know one of your angels," she said, turning away her head, "the one with the peacock's feathers in its wings."

He laughed, with a boyish and sweet gaiety.

"You have found me out," he said. "Wasn't it audacious? And that other fellow with the black and white in his wings. Do you know him? Ah, I am afraid of a critic who is so well acquainted with angels."

"Papa will be delighted," said Angela, still gazing upwards. "He will say that you did well to go to the birds for your angels' wings. I see the pheasant purple and bronze up there: and surely there in the corner is a bird-of-Paradise."

"Why, they are all birds-of-Paradise," he answered.

"You must have worked hard," she said. "Papa will be delighted with the ceiling. I know he did not expect to see so much work done."

"Why, how long have you been away?" he asked. "Three months, four months? Two

months! Surely not. And yet: yet I remember you at Easter carrying a bunch of daffodils. So I suppose it cannot have been so long after all."

"Some one has looked after you?"

"Mrs Mason watches over me like a mother. Other people would have been very kind to me, Mrs Reuben Armytage, for example. But I have had no time. I have been living with my work. You don't know how delightful it has been to see these grow."

"It must have been," said Angela, with a wistful little sigh.

Willie Armytage put in an appearance at dinner, and sat next to Angela. Mr Corbett remarked of Willie that he had evidently been working hard. Certainly Willie looked older; one might have imagined that a slightly careworn expression had settled on his pleasant face. Anne thought it was an improvement, and said so to Mr Corbett in the drawing-room after dinner. "Willie grows responsible," she said.

She was sitting with a book in her lap beside a shaded lamp. She was wearing some thin crapy stuff of a warm heliotrope colour, cut straight across the beautiful shoulders, revealing the nobly moulded white arms.

John Corbett stood a little away and watched her dark head bent in the lamplight, while her fingers were busy cutting the pages of the book.

All the windows were open, and moths flew in and out, fluttering about in the circle of the lamplight. There was a sky of faint green

outside. Mr Vallance was at the piano playing something of Wagner's which was like the swelling of a storm, like the trouble of night and tempests. A couple had passed out on the terrace: Hetty and Judy Daly, not Angela and Willie as one might have expected. They sat listening to the music. At least Angela listened. Willie leant a little forward, with his chin in his hand. He looked gloomy in the half-light. Yet what could Willie have to be gloomy about?

She looked up suddenly and met John Corbett's eyes.

"Frankly, do you hate to come back?" he asked.

"Frankly, no," she answered. "I never thought that I should become so reconciled to—to other things than Witch's Castle. When you have no longer any use for me I shall——"

"And when do you suppose that is going to be?" he said, with a passionate kindness that startled her. "I think we should all rebel, should keep you by main force if you thought of going."

"I hated to come," she said, "though I didn't pretend to Gran. I fancied you would all be so different."

"Ah," he smiled. "It is safest to begin with a little aversion."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PRODIGAL'S WIFE.

SOME one else upon whom they had not counted was awaiting Anne's return with anxiety.

Suddenly in one of her walks she met Mr Olivarez face to face, so unexpectedly that she had no time to put into execution her first impulse of flight. He was standing before her, holding out his hand in the green woodland road.

"You were going to run away from me," he said, with a smile that Anne detested.

She could not deny it, so she said nothing. Unwillingly she had let her hand touch his because she had first met him at John Corbett's table. She did not look at him, but tried to pass on with a bow.

"If you please, Miss Daly," he said, "I wish to speak to you, for I may not have another opportunity. I should like my answer from your own lips. Once I have it I shall abide by it, and shall not trouble you."

Anne lifted her eyes and looked at him. Something in the words and the way they were spoken had disarmed her.

"You can speak, of course," she said and she trembled a little. "But I may warn you that the answer will not be what you would wish to hear. Is it any use speaking?"

"I think I should like to feel afterwards that I had done my best," he said. "I have not set my mind on many things in my life as I have on this. I have generally got whatever I wanted. Perhaps my luck is going to fail me now. Will you marry me, Miss Daly?"

"No," said Anne, and a flush rose in her cheek. She was becoming conscious of the fact that her aversion for Mr Olivarez was that of a woman for the man who wants her against her will. In that one glance at his face it had occurred to her that other women might not find him so intolerable. It had a coarse beauty of its own. His eyes as they met hers had been honest, if they had been disagreeably ardent from Anne's point of view.

"I have a great deal to offer," he said slowly.

"Offer it elsewhere," Anne replied almost rudely.

"It is the privilege of a woman," he said, "to treat as an insult the greatest compliment a man can offer her."

The quiet speech went to Anne's generous heart.

"Forgive me," she said, "and let me go, Mr Olivarez. Indeed, it is not pleasant to me to be rude or give pain."

"In a minute. Of course I knew when I said I had much to offer that I had nothing you

would care to accept. If you were that sort of girl I wouldn't want you so badly. You are quite sure you will never change your mind?"

"Quite sure."

"You knew of my intentions towards you?"

Anne blushed deeply.

"I see that Corbett told you."

"He not only told me,"—Anne looked at him fearlessly,—“but he urged many things in your behalf.”

"That I was richer than himself?"

"He said that, but he knew it would not have weight with me. He said that you were well liked and well thought of."

"He didn't try to set you against me?"

"He did not."

"Ah, that was straight of him. I think I knew he wouldn't, or I'd have done him a very shrewd turn as I threatened to. Especially since he was in love with you himself. I told him so."

"Mr Olivarez!"

Anne tried to be haughty, but could not keep the waves of colour from flowing into her face, where Olivarez watched them with a most curious expression of envy.

"Corbett's a lucky fellow," he said. "He doesn't deserve it in one sense, for he is ten years older than I, and he ought to have lived his life. Miss Daly, I'd marry Corbett if I were you. Yes; I see you will. A woman like you doesn't blush for nothing. Good-bye, Miss Daly, and forgive me for annoying you; I wanted my

answer from your own lips, that was all. Your face has given me my final answer."

He strode on, leaving Anne to take her own way in great perturbation of spirit. Was it true, as he had said, that John Corbett was in love with her?—as he had suggested, that she was in love with him? A speech of her girlhood, long forgotten, returned to her mind. "I should like to marry a man named John; it sounds so strong and reliable." And was this why she had found another man's wooing so intolerable?

From habit she looked down at where Brian's portrait had been used to rise and fall on her bosom. It was no longer there; nor was she wearing his ring. She had said to herself when she laid them gently aside in their velvet-lined cases, that she did so because she had given up looking for Brian to return. But she had not long pretended to deceive herself: she was too candid to have sophistries even with herself.

She was on her way to see Mrs Perkins. She had had a letter of entreaty, written by a secretary and signed by Mrs Perkins in an ill-formed, commercial hand. Mrs Perkins had the gout, and could not get to her carriage without torture. She had a special reason for wishing to see Miss Daly. Would Miss Daly come as soon as possible?

Anne read haste and need into the secretary's formal note. The Duchess had repeated to her that her old friend had missed her sadly. She heard the same report from old Mrs Corbett, who had kept house at Minster while they were

all away, and had accumulated a great stock of knitted shawls and Cardigan jackets and stockings and gloves against the cold Christmas that was so far away in these radiant summer days. Mrs Perkins had come and taken Mrs Corbett for drives. She had breathed many times into that well of silence and safety her unsatisfied existence since she had been a wealthy woman and run after by the great and titled.

Anne was walking faster than she was aware of, because she was thinking so hard and so excitedly, when a voice soft as a feather falling reached her ear.

"Miss Anne," it cried, "Miss Anne."

The voice brought memories of Witch's Castle and old days, and soft, slow, easy-going ways. It was a long time since she had heard it, but she knew that it was familiar. She pulled herself up short on her headlong descent into a little ravine through which the road wound, turned about and came face to face with a girl in a widow's bonnet and cloak. She looked hot and tired in the heavy dragging things, and her pale lips were apart as though she panted for breath. She had something in her arm—a baby lying in the tender curve which a baby takes in its accustomed place.

"Miss Anne."

Anne looked into the face, pale, where she remembered creamy whiteness with an underlying tinge of brown, into the fond, timid, gentle brown eyes.

"Lizzie Brennan!" she said. "Lizzie Brennan! And what in Heaven's name brings you here,

child, so far from Ballincrusheen? What has been happening to you at all? And why don't you go home?"

"Miss Anne, the people I went to service to in Dublin took me away to England, and I went because I was fond of them. And then the master,—he was in the army,—had to go to India, and they'd have taken me there, only I couldn't put all that distance between me and Ballincrusheen. So the mistress found a place for me; but I wasn't happy. It didn't seem homely somehow, the people being English, and I left it, and after that I had great trouble and misfortune."

"But you were good, Lizzie, you were good?" said Anne, putting out her hand to touch the sleeping baby's cheek. "You were the nuns' pet pupil; and Father Kelly thought a deal of you. You were always so gentle and modest, and truly religious. You married, Lizzie, and are a widow, but you were always a good child?"

The entreaty in Anne's voice might have been that of the angel guardian pleading with his charge.

"I never forgot my religion, Miss Anne," answered Lizzie, taking a weight off Anne's heart. "And I needn't be ashamed to go back to Ballincrusheen to-morrow. But I got among very poor people, Miss Anne, and in terrible parts of London where the country was as far away as Heaven. And there in a lodging-house where I was servant I met my husband. He was a gentleman, Miss Anne,"—Lizzie spoke with

naïve pride,—“and, God bless him, he'd never have thought of wronging a poor girl. We were married by the priest, and this is my baby.”

She took the wrappings from about the child's head, and showed a little silken mass of very dark curls. The lashes on the cheeks were silky black also. The complexion was Lizzie's as it had once been. All else the child must have derived from its father.

“But why are you here, Lizzie? Did you know I was here? Perhaps you heard from Ballinacrusheen. There, give me that great boy. I can take him without waking him. Let us sit down on this grass bank. I want to hear all about you.”

They sat down on the bank, facing a break in the hedgerow where a white gate opened. It was a back entrance to Culvers, Mrs Perkins' place. Lizzie must have been standing by the gate when Anne had passed without noticing her. The transference of the baby had been made, and Anne sat looking down at it with a face scarcely less maternal than the mother's. A sheet of wild roses flowed softly behind them. The air was full of the songs of June, of the stir of quiet life in tree and flower that is the air of June.

“No, indeed then. When I saw you go by, I was that surprised that only I had *him* in my arms I'd ha' fainted, I believe. It was like seein' a ghost. And I tried to call after you and couldn't at first, and 'twas only the fear of losin' you gave me stren'th to do it.”

"Then what brought you here, Lizzie?"

"Well, Miss Anne, because I've been doin' wrong. The baby's grandmother lives in that fine house over there. . . ."

"Culvers! Mrs Perkins! Lizzie, it wasn't *you* that married Mrs Perkins' son!"

"It was then, Miss Anne. But she was terrible hard-hearted to me. She wouldn't see me after he was dead, though only for me he wouldn't have had a happy hour before he died. He used to say,—he never had a good word for himself,—that the only sensible and rational act he done in his life was to marry me. An' he used to say she'd forgive him, though he'd gone near breakin' her heart, when she knew me. 'But that musn't be yet, Liz, my girl,' he used to say, 'because she was set on my marryin' a lady. I'll have to tell her first that you were only my best friend, and that you'd turned me from feedin' with the pigs, an' when she got to know you, she'd ha' found out for herself that God had made you a lady if the world didn't.' It was his way o' talkin', Miss Anne. But sure, there was no time for anything. He'd given himself too many hardships, God help him, an' there was no time at all to do anything in this world, for he went and died on me."

Big tears formed in Lizzie's eyes, that had the peace of the cattle in the pasture in their liquid depths, formed and overflowed. She wiped the tears away with quiet resignation as she went on with her story.

"An' when he was dead the mother wouldn't

see me. She treated me as if I'd been a bad girl, Miss Anne, and it was only the thought of what *he* used to think of me kep' me up in those cruel days. An' she flung me like a dog a lot of money that I'd no use for, for wasn't my mother dead on me too at home in Ballincrusheen? But I took it, because I'd a thought in my mind. I never said a word about the baby; but I thought when he was born I'd just go back with him to Ballincrusheen an' no one 'ud have a word to say to him but myself. I was terrible afeard she'd try to get him from me, Miss Anne. An' sure I'd be there now with him,"—she spoke with an air of longing, as one who sees safety across stretches of danger,—“if I hadn't met with Father Roche. 'Twas he bid me let th' ould lady know about the baby,—‘For,’ says he, ‘supposin’ you were took sick an’ died, there’d be nothing for him but the poorhouse. You wouldn’t wrong your own child?’ says he; ‘an’ what’s more, she can’t take him from you. Indeed, I’ve hopes she won’t want to,’ whatever he maned by that.”

“Indeed I think perhaps Father Roche was right,” said Anne in a voice that trembled. So many things were rushing upon her mind that it was in a whirl.

She looked at Lizzie’s face in the neat framing of the widow’s bonnet. It looked gentle and refined. Though she was a little dusty, just a little bit disordered, no passer-by would have thought of her as anything but a lady. The child was daintily dressed, and was as pretty

as a picture. Anne would not stop to think. She never did stop to think; only luckily her impulses were nearly always better than other people's well-considered actions. She jumped up in such haste that the baby opened one eye and looked up at her inquiringly.

"You must put yourself in my hands, Lizzie," she said. "Don't ask me any questions. As it happens, my way and your way lie together."

She crossed over and opened the gate that led to Culvers, the obedient Lizzie following in her wake.

The baby's second eye had followed the first. Two large orbs, so gray as to be almost black, stared at her inquiringly. Then the baby smiled.

They were on Culver land by this time.

"Smile away, my beauty," said Anne. "You are on your own land now."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HEIR OF THE AGES.

MRS PERKINS sat with her foot swathed in many bandages raised on a sofa. A table drawn close to her was covered with ledgers and papers of all sorts. She liked to keep herself acquainted with the details of the business from which she drew her enormous income. But this afternoon somehow salt and savour had gone out of things. What was the good of it all when she was childless? Sometimes she was able to put her hunger to sleep by keeping her thoughts on the munificent benefactions she was going to make to hospitals and charitable institutions of all kinds. But not now. The woman in her craved for a more particular object for her love and generosity than the great mass of humanity.

"He was a beautiful baby," she said out aloud. And then she choked: she was thinking of her Georgie in the days when he was her exquisite delight, before ever she could have dreamt that one day he would break her heart.

She had her days of shrewd and dreary disillusion when she realised that she had no real place in her world, that she existed there only

on sufferance and by reason of her money. She was tired of being sought after for what she could give: disgusted with the fine people whose demands on her generosity were sometimes shamelessly greedy.

"He was a beautiful baby," she repeated to herself.

"Miss Daly," announced the footman at the other end of the long drawing-room.

The lonely old woman's face brightened. She looked eagerly towards Anne, who was coming along between the china tables and silver tables and impedimenta of all kinds with which the room was tastelessly crowded. Mrs Perkins liked to surround herself with bric-a-brac, and was sure she had it good since she employed an expert to buy it for her. She liked to have it, and to bestow it on others carelessly and generously. By way of Mrs Perkins many a rare and priceless *biblot* found its way into the collections of the fine ladies of the county.

"It's good for sore eyes to see you," she called out before Anne was half-way up the room. "There, my dear, turn that lazy Tricks off the chair and bring it close to me. I was just thinking that though the dogs are great company for a lonely person like me, there are times when one wants the sound of a human voice."

"A bark is as good most times," said Anne brightly.

Mrs Perkins sighed.

"They love you for yourself anyhow, my dear,

and I don't suppose if you asked Tricks or Tray or Boxer there but what they'd say I was the prettiest woman in Smokeshire."

"I've no doubt they would," said Anne, stooping to pull a silky ear.

"I've so wanted to see you. The time was long while you were in your own country. You'll have some tea? Yes, we shall, and you will pour it out for me. I told Thomas just before you came that I didn't want any. I wonder if lonely women ever starve to death just because they don't care to eat alone! I used to be that fond of my cup of tea. 'Dear me!' John used to say, 'there ain't no tea like yours, mother.' Just ring the bell, my dear. It'll be different having you here."

She glanced curiously at Anne's face, by which it was plain to see that something had happened.

"I wonder," she said, "if you happened to meet Olivarez, my dear. He was here an hour ago, and I do remember now that I mentioned that I hoped you'd walk over this afternoon."

"Yes: I met him," said Anne.

"I hope he didn't worrit you, dear," said Mrs Perkins, watching her with wistful eyes. "When he wants anything he's terrible set on it. I've known him, boy and man, for a matter of nearly thirty years. I hope he hasn't worritted you. Bless you, it's a free country. No one can make you do anything against your will."

The bright colour mounted in Anne's cheeks.

"Do you know," she said, "that I think Mr Olivarez was rather generous to me?"

"Ah! that's all right then. He isn't bad at heart. In fact, in business, where no one's expected to be kind, I've heard of Ferdinand Olivarez doing very kind things, mad things some people thought them. There; there's none of us all good or all bad. There are things said against Olivarez; I wouldn't have had you marry him, my dear. But he has done handsome things, in a big way too."

"And now tell me," said Anne, closing the subject of Mr Olivarez finally, "how have you been all this long time? I know you came to see Mrs Corbett and were kind to the old soul. Her son is grateful; we all are. But tell me how you have been."

"Worritted, dear, worritted," said Mrs Perkins, taking out a large silk handkerchief and wiping her brows. "And now you see me here crippled. They call it gout because I'm a rich woman. How would I get gout? I once had the housemaid's knee from constant kneeling and scrubbing the little house where Georgie was born. I was so proud to have a house of my own that I nearly scrubbed it away. 'You'll wear a hole through the floor, my girl,' John used to say in his joking way. But, bless you, flesh and blood wear out faster than boards, so I got the housemaid's knee. My leg is a sight to see now."

"I hope it will soon be better," said Anne, laying a light hand on the beautiful coverlet

that was thrown across Mrs Perkins' knees. "The sitting and lying must be irksome, especially to an active person like you."

"It's more than common troublesome now, for I've wanted to be off to London. I've thought a deal on what you said about the girl my Georgie married. You were right. I ought to have seen her. But I made up my mind to it too late. She was gone."

"Gone?"

"She hadn't come for her money for two quarters back, and there was no word of her at her lodgings. So Drake wrote to me. He said he believed the woman at the lodgings was keeping back something. She was a very violent woman, Drake said—an Irishwoman. She threatened his clerk to fling him into the street and his bag after him. What business had the man to send his clerk? He should have gone himself. I wonder how many thousands a year we're worth to him! I shouldn't be afraid to tackle her. But here I am lying here, not able to stir if it was ever so. I don't know how long 'tis going to be either."

Anne sat looking down and turning pale and red. Suddenly she lifted her eyes and looked at Mrs Perkins.

"Supposing your son's wife were a gentle, refined, pure-minded Irish peasant girl," she said, "for whose innocence I could answer as for my own: who had drifted to that place out of the necessity the Irish have of herding together, and because she was lost in London? Supposing your

son had really picked a daisy off that unlikely ground? Supposing she worshipped him? Supposing she is so gentle and docile and teachable, being a lady of nature's own making, that she only wants more education to make her as much a lady externally as she is in her real character? An Irish convent-school girl who has lived for years in daily association with the nuns, is a long way on the road to being a lady if she is at heart pure and refined as Lizzie is."

"Lizzie! You know her, then. It isn't a fairy-tale you are making up for me!" cried Mrs Perkins, turning so darkly purple that for an instant Anne was frightened.

"As though I should do such a thing! I have found her for you. You have but to see her. She grew up under Gran's eyes; I have known her since she was a toddling child."

"And she loved my boy, you say? She was with him to the last? When can I see her? I'll travel to her if I have to do it on my back. I've wanted to see my Georgie's widow all the time and to be fond of her if I could. How was I to know that she was a good girl?"

"You shall see her at once, but you must not be too excited over it, or I shall have to keep her back. She is here, in the house. I asked the man who opened the door to let her wait for me in another room."

"Bring her to me."

"There is some one with her."

"Let me see her alone."

"Why, this is some one who will not be separated from his mother. It is your grandson. He is a year old, and a beautiful boy."

"My grandson!"

Mrs Perkins' plain face was so transfigured with ecstasy that for a moment Anne could hardly recognise her. The mixed feelings of a few minutes before had passed by. This was pure joy and could do her no harm.

With incredible quickness Anne's light feet traversed the distance between Mrs Perkins' sofa and the little room where Lizzie sat uneasily on the edge of a big velvet chair.

"Come," she said. "She is longing to see you, but she cannot walk. Let me take the baby. But no, take him yourself. Lift up his veil, let her see what a beautiful boy he is."

As they came in Mrs Perkins struggled to a sitting posture, and forgetting the gout put her foot to the floor. Anne hurried the timid Lizzie along when she would have held back.

"There," she said, "put the boy into his grandmother's arms. There is a baby for any one to be proud of! Just look at his rosy cheeks, at the little black rings of hair. Isn't he a beauty?"

She had a thought that Mrs Perkins' face as she received the baby was like the face of the prophetess in the Temple when her arms received the King of all babies. Something divine, like a great wave of light, flowed and ebbed, ebbed and flowed, in the poor plain face that Anne had thought so ugly and ignoble on her first introduction to it.

"'Tis my Georgie given back to me again in his innocence," she said. "May the Name of the Lord be praised! He's dealt kinder with me than ever I deserved."

She held the child against her breast, rocking him to and fro. He opened his eyes, and his lips parted in a friendly smile.

"He knows me, he knows his gran already," cried poor Mrs Perkins. "There, take him, dearie. I don't want to cry over him. And oh, my heaven, how am I going to bear so much joy?"

And placing him gently back in his mother's arms, she burst into happy tears.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RETURN.

THE work in the chapel was not progressing favourably. Day after day the young artist painted something only to paint it out again, or after an hour or two of feverish activity to stand frowning at the result, biting his nails and looking as though all his world had gone wrong. He had hardly achieved anything since Angela's return, and she knew it, for she sometimes stole in there early in the morning when she was not likely to be discovered, and gazed at the still companionless Archangel, and sighed and went out again. One morning, turning to leave the chapel, she came face to face with the artist.

"Have you been here often?" he asked, with a little thrill in his voice. "Why did you come at an hour like this when I was unlikely to see you? Do you know that you have taken my inspiration with you, keeping away from the chapel day after day? Why, how could I paint when I was always listening for the rustle of your dress, the sound of your footstep?"

She made as though she would have passed him, but he did not offer to make way for her.

"You used to take an interest," he said petulantly. "When you were away I thought all the time that I was painting for you. But if you do not care, Miss Angela, I think I will ask your father to let me off the work. The ceiling can stand, and I shall paint out the St Michael. It is time for me to be off tramping again."

Angela put a timid hand on his sleeve.

"Oh, please don't do that," she said. "He is so beautiful, the St Michael I mean. Won't you paint the others? I should feel that I had murdered some beautiful creatures. Indeed I am interested. I have been here every day though you have not seen me. And I have grieved that the work was not making progress."

His face lit up.

"You really care!" he said. "Why, what an ungrateful fellow I am! What a dull fellow, too, or I should have known of your presence, even after it was gone. Will you come every day for a few minutes and tell me what you think of my work? Will you? I believe it will make all the difference between success and failure. Will you come at this hour? There will be no one then. If you knew how little I cared what others thought about it! But now,—you will see that you have given life to Archangels and Angels, Principalities and Powers."

It was eight in the morning, the dewy hour when the garden yet smoked with the mists ascending in the golden air, when everything

smelt sweet, being yet refreshed with the coolness of the night.

"Will you come?" he asked again.

"I will come," she answered. "I am nearly always out-of-doors by this hour. Could I will the non-existence of those magnificently-named personages?"

She was a little pale, but she was smiling, as she listened to his exaggerated expressions of gratitude. Were not artists always exaggerated? She would be stupid to attach too much importance to the things he said.

For a month or more she kept her promise to him and they met morning by morning in the chapel. The walls that had been gray and bare grew lovely with the eyes and the wings and the hair of angels. Gabriel was now by Michael. Ithuriel, with his spear, was beginning to come into existence.

No one intruded on those morning meetings, and they spoke of them to no one. There were a great many absorbing things happening round about them which explained, perhaps, the little notice taken of them. For one thing Lord Godfrey had taken to haunting the house in his off-work hours after that first day when he had set eyes on Judy. The attraction seemed to have been mutual, for that shyest of little girls, although at first she trembled and fled from his presence, had very soon yielded to his impetuous wooing. He had made little Judy his own before he said anything to anybody, though the whole world might see

how it was with him. Then he went to the Duchess.

"Aunt Jane," he said, "I'm the luckiest fellow alive; and the most grateful to you. But for you I should never have seen her."

"Have seen whom?" asked the lady, pretending to misunderstand him.

"Why, Judy!" he answered, staring at her. "Who should it be but Judy? I told you how it would be the first time I set eyes upon her. Who could it be but Judy?"

"Who indeed?" said the lady comically. "Of course there is no one but Judy in the world. Well, young man, and what do you expect me to do for you and Judy? I hoped your first infatuation might have passed. I confess I had quite other views for you."

"So had the Duke. He had an heiress in his eye for me. He thought a sensible marriage might make me mend my ways. I shan't bother any one, though there are always jobs going for the younger sons of dukes. Judy has no end of pluck. She'll go with me to Africa if need be. I don't mind where, so long as she goes with me; only it mustn't be too pestilential for her sake. There will be railways needed there."

"You're a selfish pig," said her Grace. "It isn't your father; he has plenty of you: it's I. Don't you know I've been getting fond of you, sir?"

He looked at her, conscience-stricken; then leaned forward and kissed her rosy cheek.

"My tongue ran away with me, Aunt Jane," he said. "I'm not such a pig as all that. One of the first things I said to Judy was that you were the best friend a fellow ever had, and that I should mind leaving you more than leaving my own people."

"You said that?" The Duchess caught him to a motherly breast. "Why, you shall never leave me, neither you nor Judy. You are to comfort me for the boy I lost. I shall have your children on my knee, Godfrey. You don't know how I love babies. Where is that minx, Judy? I suppose I must kiss and forgive her. I have enough for all of us, and some one else must build the African railways."

This of itself was enough to absorb Anne to the exclusion of Angela and her affairs. But, truth to tell, she had something engrossing of her own.

After that Irish visit she could never be the same as before with John Corbett. The old relations of employer and employed, which she had tried to insist upon delicately in the old days, could no more be kept up. John Corbett would not permit it.

He was head over ears in the carrying out of a certain plan which had long been dear to his heart. The revenues of Armytage, Armytage and Corbett grew like a rolling snowball in the night. The partners were not minded to become like those unhappy men who are haunted by the spectre of their own riches.

The plan in fine was the acquisition of a

certain country estate about five miles from Elsdon. This was to be made the site of houses for the workmen employed by the firm. It was not to lose its country character; not a tree was to be destroyed. The houses were to be built, as much as possible out of sight of each other, each with its clump of trees, each with its goodly space of grass. A famous architect had designed the houses, taking for his model the outward picturesqueness of the old English village, while the interiors of the houses had modern comforts and modern sanitation. The place was to be a garden city. It was to be served from within by its own street of village shops. The laws were stringent to exclude and cast out the idler, the vicious, the unprofitable.

"If we could have the like in Donegal!" said Anne. Her head was close to John Corbett's as they bent over the plans on the library table. "But of course we should need the industries first."

"And why not?" he asked, looking at her strangely, agitatedly; "why not? Why should we not have the industries first and build the village together afterwards, you and I together?"

Before she could answer him, beyond the sudden rose and white of her face, a servant knocked at the door. The Duchess of St Kilda was in the drawing-room.

Anne fled to her friend and was deeply grateful for the interruption. Only she wanted to get away, to be alone. Her thoughts were

in turmoil. She did not feel ready yet to answer him. And first she must tell him about Brian. Was she yet free of Brian?

The Duchess noticed her agitation, but was too wise a woman to remark upon it. She chattered of what was nearest her own heart, and Anne was grateful for the respite. She was going over to Ireland with her nephew to ask Madam Daly's consent to an engagement between her grandchild, Judy, and Lord Godfrey Ingestre.

"I wish I might come too," said Anne wistfully, "although I have been there so lately." She wanted to go back to Gran, to ask Gran to set her free from her pledge to Brian. After all, was it not her love for Gran that had really held her bound all those years? If Gran were to ban her now, not even the new love could bless her.

"I wish you might. How will Madam take it? I mean this affair of Godfrey and Judy?"

Anne smiled. She had learned to laugh at her own family pride.

"She will say that it is a suitable match even for her grandchild. But she will make a favour of it, Duchess. You need not expect anything else."

"I should be disappointed if she didn't. Anne, she would never accept it from me; but somehow you must manage for me that I shall help my boy's wife's grandmother. I did not know myself how rich I was till I consulted my men of business the other day. For example, you need

not leave her alone with the old Abbé in the old house of stormy winter nights."

She watched Anne's clear, child-like face, with her eyes narrowed between the lids. Anne had never learnt to conceal her feelings.

"Perhaps . . . she would not accept it," Anne said haltingly. "You have no idea of her pride; it is fanatical."

"That I should hear you say so! And you, Anne? You still look for the return of the wild cousin? Tell me, child: how have you been faithful to his memory all these years? If he should come! Isn't it a risk? You might feel that things were so changed."

Anne turned her large musing eyes upon her.

"Why, I have thought of it," she said; "I have been thinking of it for some time. We were only children. Now I am a woman in the thirties. People change. They can't help it, can they? Oh, Duchess, I never thought to have spoken of it to any one, but I have realised it for some time. Supposing that Brian were to come back, and that I were to find he was not the Brian I had been thinking of all these years, would Gran still hold me bound to him? Would she hold me now that he has not come back?"

"Don't look so frightened, Anne," said the Duchess soothingly. "Doubtless he will not come back. I should make up my mind if I were you that he would not come back. Madam is too wise a woman to hold you bound."

"You think so," she said. "I wish I had had

courage to ask her when I was there. I might have trusted her love. Oh, I wish I could go back and ask her. Poor Brian! Perhaps he found out that it was all a mistake too."

"If he is alive," said the Duchess to herself, "he has doubtless a savage wife somewhere, and a wigwam full of wild children."

But to Anne of the ideals she would not put the thought in words.

The door opened quietly.

"Sir Brian Daly," announced the footman.

Anne uttered a sharp cry, and then stood as though turned to stone while the big red-headed person in the very outlandish-looking clothes took her in his arms and kissed her.

CHAPTER XXX.

A KING-CONSORT.

SIR BRIAN had a somewhat shamefaced air after the first ardour of his greetings of his cousin was over, and the Duchess noticed it with satisfaction.

"Depend on it," she said, "he's been up to something. I wonder now what it can be, and if it will alter the position of affairs at all."

She watched Anne with keen appreciation of her courage. Anne smiled at Brian's ruddy cheeks and fiery head as though he were the sun in her sky. She drew Brian down beside her on the couch. All the time she was thinking how she must go back and tell John Corbett that she had let his love for her grow without telling him that there was another man; and now the other man had returned, and held her bound. He had come straight from Witch's Castle, having spent but a day and a night there. He had come home rich enough from the South Seas, where he had been trading, to lift the family back to its ancient splendour. But he had not told Gran a thousandth part of his adventures, which were like a fairy-tale. He had come straight to Anne. Didn't she know that he would come straight

to her? He had been horrified not to find her at Witch's Castle, and at learning what she was doing.

"And I think I shall say good afternoon," said the Duchess, standing up and spreading her rustling skirts. "You'll have a deal to talk about to each other. I'm going to be a sort of relative of yours, Sir Brian, which will excuse the interest I take in you. We shall have abundant opportunities of becoming better acquainted."

"I've heard from the Gran about little Ju. I can't say I know her. Why, she was in long frocks or very little more when I left Ireland," said the young man. And then, in a great hurry, "Don't go, ma'am: pray don't go: I assure you I'm delighted to meet you. There's nothing Nan and I have to say that need send you away."

Her Grace beamed on him, although he was holding Anne's hand more affectionately than she quite approved. But then a long-lost cousin might do that.

"Now what have you been up to, my fine young man?" she asked herself: and added mentally, "I don't leave this house either till I find out how things are between you and Anne, and whether she's going to break John Corbett's heart because of this old nonsense between you and her."

"Well, since you're so very kind," she said, resuming her seat.

After a second or two Anne stood up,—she had been growing paler and paler the Duchess

noticed,—and with a murmured apology left them together.

"I wish I knew where she was going to," thought the Duchess. "However, this young man interests me more for the moment. I wonder if I could get him to confide in me. I may be able to help everybody all round."

She opened her bonnet-strings and let them fall each side her face. She took off her cloak. Plainly she had not postponed her departure by only a short interval. Her broad, open, honest face was enough to inspire any one with confidence, especially any one for whom it wore such an expression of good-will as it now wore for Sir Brian.

"I am really delighted to have been almost the first to welcome you," she said. "I hope you are going to stay at home and make your grandmother happy. And I do hope you look upon me as a relative already."

Sir Brian stood up and walked as far as the fireplace and back. He thrust both his hands into his red hair, and ruffled it up till it stood on end like the plumes of a cockatoo. His blue eyes looked at the Duchess with such perturbation that she felt a sudden sharp sympathy for him as though he were a child in disgrace.

"You're uncommonly kind, ma'am," he said. "And since you're so kind, you make me confess to you that I'm in no end of a scrape."

"I thought as much. Young men who go off to the end of the world and disappear for a dozen

years are very likely to be in a scrape. Come, I don't think it's so bad a one that you can't be helped out of it. What is it?"

Before he could answer the Duchess stood up, went to the drawing-room door and deliberately locked it.

"It would be a nice story for Matilda Packington," she said to herself and smiled a little grimly. "But I must take the risk of being found locked up alone with this young man. No one shall interrupt us till I've had the whole story out of him."

"Well, go on," she said. "I'll try to stand your friend, no matter what you've been up to."

"It's about Nan," he began, sending her an absurdly grateful glance from his blue eyes.

"H'm!" she mused. "Anne hadn't such bad taste after all. There's something to be said for perpetual boyhood."

"Well, what about Nan?"

"As a matter of fact I went away with a sort of engagement between Nan and myself. We were youngsters. I had very queer experiences after I went away, and indeed, ma'am, for a considerable time I was quite unable to get a letter home or to get myself home. I wouldn't have let the old woman and Nan wait if I had. In the end, the little affair faded out of sight. The Gran should never have allowed it. Upon my honour she shouldn't. We were first cousins and had been brought up like brother and sister. You don't approve of the marriages of first cousins?"

He looked at her with the anxiety of the seeker after truth in his ingenuous countenance.

"As a general thing, no," replied the Duchess, with a humorous twinkle. "Well, what else happened to make you take new views on the subject of consanguinity?"

Sir Brian stared. He did not quite take in the word. However, he apparently caught the drift of the remark, for he looked more shame-faced than ever.

"Tell me, ma'am," he said, "before I get any further, does Nan care anything about me? You're her friend, and perhaps she has confided in you."

"If she did, wild horses wouldn't drag it from me. But as a matter of fact she doesn't, except as a cousin, Sir Brian."

"Hurroo!"

The young man executed something like a caper.

"I'm surprised at you," said her Grace. "And I'm sure it's a bad compliment to Anne after all the years she has worn your picture in a locket."

"Anne's the best girl in the world except one, and she nearly lost her kingdom for me."

"Her kingdom?"

"Yes: she's Lady Daly, but she's also Queen Amaua of Aloa. It's the purest race in the islands of the Pacific, and she's a lovely creature. Civilised too; there's an old Portuguese Mission in Aloa, and they have been Christians since the days of Francis Xavier."

"Does your grandmother know?"

"Not yet; she won't be able to resist Amaua, and she can take no exception on the ground of birth. Amaua's pedigree knocks ours into a cocked hat."

The Duchess just stopped herself from suggesting that Sir Brian's scrape was a scrape indeed. After all he seemed so beamingly happy about it now he was sure that Anne's affections were not involved. Why should it not be that he had really done as well for himself as he believed?

"Have you brought your bride home?" she asked.

"No. As a matter of fact there's a law of the country against the queen leaving it. Besides she isn't a bride. We've been married six years. There is a boy. And I'm a sort of king-consort. When I've settled up Gran's affairs I'm bound to go back."

"Upon my word, your Majesty," said the Duchess grimly, "I think those six years are rather against you. Still it may have been providential. Supposing we say nothing about the length of time to Anne?"

"I'm sorry,"—his countenance fell. "I couldn't get away before. I was helping to reorganise the kingdom. And, I say, ma'am, don't call me 'Your Majesty,' please. It sounds as though you were making fun of me."

"Which I'm not likely to do, seeing you have given me your confidence," said the Duchess handsomely. "Well, I'd better unlock the door. Luckily no one has been at it or I shouldn't

have had a shred of character left as soon as the story had reached Matilda Packington. I'll tell you what. Just step out here and smoke some of the green-fly off the roses,"—she had unlocked the door while she was speaking, and she now indicated another door leading into a conservatory,—“and I'll find Anne and break things to her. She'll tell your grandmother that she has a queen for a granddaughter-in-law. But I'll never trust blue eyes again.”

Sir Brian stared.

“Nan always got me out of scrapes. And I say—you're no end kind to me, Duchess.”

She pushed him through the conservatory door, and closing it upon him went to look for Anne in her own room.

As a matter of fact she was not there. When she went away leaving the Duchess and Sir Brian together she had gone back to the library where she had left John Corbett. She must tell him that her cousin had returned, believing her true to him. The one intolerable, unthinkable thing would be that the two men should meet before John Corbett knew. The fear that any moment might bring him to the drawing-room had put the other fear out of sight; yet she had to turn aside into a quiet room for a few minutes to recover herself before she could face him.

He looked up smiling as she came in.

“The Duchess did not keep you long,” he said. “I was just coming to speak to her and ask for a cup of tea. Am I too late?”

She did not take the seat he offered. She

stood beside him with her head bent, her colour coming and going. He thought she trembled a little, and he began to wonder.

"What is it?" he asked gently. "Has anything happened? Any bad news?"

"Good news," she said, her head sinking lower. "My cousin Brian has come home. He is in the drawing-room talking to the Duchess."

"Your cousin Brian? The long-lost cousin? How glad Madam will be! Let me welcome him."

"Gran would never believe he was dead. She would never let me believe it. Lately I have been thinking that he was dead, or at least would never return."

"What is he to you?" John Corbett asked sharply. "I mean beyond the fact that he is your cousin."

She began to tremble violently. Could this be Anne who had always been so proud?

"I want to tell you. You must hear it from no one but me," she began.

Suddenly the door opened, and the Duchess rushed in.

"My dearest Anne," she said, "I have the strangest news to impart to you. That erratic young man, your cousin, has been confiding in me, and I have promised that you shall intercede with Madam Daly for him. He is not only a married man, but he is the king-consort of a reigning queen in one of the Pacific Islands. What will Madam Daly say?"

She was watching Anne shrewdly.

"If she shrieks or faints or turns white," she said to herself, "I shall never forgive myself. It is a bold stroke. Pray Heaven I came at the right moment!"

For a second all sorts of conflicting emotions were visible in Anne's face. Then it cleared up, and she smiled.

"Poor Brian," she said. "It is exactly like him. I must get him out of this scrape with Gran. But . . . a black queen!"

"Not black, my dear, brown. A Christian with a long pedigree, and beautiful. I believe your cousin meditates carrying Madam back with him to make acquaintance with his wife and her great-grandson."

"Ah, there is a baby." Anne's face softened still more. "I will do what I can with Gran. She will forgive Brian even this. She has always forgiven him. But it will take time, this time."

"Let me come and welcome your cousin," said John Corbett, speaking for the first time.

"I will bring him to you, Anne," said the Duchess, with great presence of mind. "I sent him into the conservatory from the drawing-room lest other visitors should come."

Anne would have followed her, but John Corbett laid his hand on hers and kept her. The door closed behind the Duchess's ample back.

"Do you know that you frightened me?" he said with quiet intensity. "I shall not be so frightened again. Let your cousin wait a moment. Anne, will you accept me and this house

where the woman I loved in my boyhood was once mistress?"

"Miss Angel?" she said, turning to him. There were tears in her eyes.

"You know about her?"

"The Duchess told me. I shall not have the great love of your life, but I would not push out Miss Angel if I could."

"You will have no cause to complain," he answered.

"Now let me tell you," she said. "I have been engaged to my Cousin Brian all those years. But lately I have known that if he were to return I should have to break the engagement. The only thing that troubled me was that it was near Gran's heart. She had grown wonderfully fond of you, but I did not know how she would take it that you should push out Brian."

"Sir Brian's queen must make up to her for your *mésalliance*," he said, smiling down at her.

She looked up at him with the most lovely humility.

"It is you who exalt me," she replied.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LADY OF COUNSEL.

MRS REUBEN ARMYTAGE'S usual sweet placidity was disturbed. She was not happy for her Willie, who, in these latter days, went about with a little pucker in his brow, and a curious trouble and gloom in the depths of his velvety eyes. His colour was shifting, too, on his downy cheek. Mrs Reuben had had a boy who died of consumption at sixteen. A resemblance between Willie's face and David's when he began to sicken stabbed the mother's heart.

She guessed that there was something wrong about Willie's love affairs; but the boy had offered her no confidence, and she was too wise a woman to force it. When the time came, she said to herself, Willie would tell her everything. He had never had secrets from his mother. Meanwhile she prayed a good deal, yet the peace of her eyes was clouded.

At last the time came. One day when the children were all abroad enjoying themselves,—she had supposed Willie to be with the rest,—he came quietly into that little plainly-furnished room where so many wounds had been healed.

so many aches comforted, so much counsel given, so many prayers said.

"I had a headache, mother," he said, in explanation of his presence, "and so I let the others go without me. Perhaps, too, I wanted to be with you. It is quite a long time since I have had you to myself, little mother."

"A headache!" she repeated. "Has my boy a headache? Sit you down here, Willie dear, and I'll see what I have that is good for headaches."

She pushed him gently into a deep arm-chair, and took out her keys, turning them over till she found the key of the little medicine-chest full of homeopathic preparations with which she had been accustomed to treat their childish ailments.

"No, no," he said, smiling, "I don't want your little pilules, mother. I think your hand on my hair would ease the headache more than anything you could give me."

He flung himself on the carpet by her chair, and rested his head against her knees. She placed her soft cool hands on his forehead, and smoothed back his curls.

"Thy forehead throbs, son," she said, reverting unconsciously to her Quaker speech. "What ails thee, child?"

He answered nothing for a little while, but closed his eyes as though he felt it luxuriously pleasant to be where he was.

"There is no one like you, mother," he said after a little while. "You never bother."

"Don't I, son? I fret when things are not going well with the children."

He reached back to kiss her hand.

"Everything goes well with us while we have you," he said.

"Yet you are troubled, Willie?"

"You have discovered it?" he said with a start.

"I thought I had kept it to myself."

"It would be strange if I did not know when things were wrong with my Willie. Is it Angela?"

"Angela is an angel. It is myself."

"Thyself. What is wrong with thee, Willie?"

He suddenly put away her tender hand and scrambled to his feet. Standing there before the fireplace he frowned at the ground, his eyes moody under their lids. She watched him anxiously. She was a woman who lived in her children.

"It is myself," he repeated. "Mother, I do not know what to do."

"Tell me," she implored, her fond, faithful eyes resting upon him. "Tell me, and light will come to us. We will ask for it together."

He came over then and stood by her chair.

"You know," he said, "how it has always been with me and Angela. I never thought of any one else,—did I?—during all the time we were growing up together."

"Never. Nor she of any one but you."

"I thought so; I hoped so; now, mother, I almost pray that it is not so, for I'm afraid I have made a mistake. Mother, it is not like your son to do such a thing, to ask a girl's love and promise, and when it had been given

to find that after all that was not what he wanted."

"You found . . . that you had made a mistake about your feeling for Angela?"

"I found that I had made a mistake. Mother, darling, I am ashamed to confess it to you, but at least Angela shall not suffer. When I left here in May and went back to my books I found, little by little, and yet the knowledge came as a terrible shock at last, that it was not Angela's face that was in my dreams, not Angela I thought about, struggle as I would against it. I found that Angela's place had been taken. I used to think her face the most beautiful thing in all the world. Now some one else has pushed her out. Morning, noon, and night, mother, I think of Hetty, little Hetty, for whom I had never more than a brotherly affection. I have tried to fight it, but it is no use. Comfort me, mother. Mother, tell me what I am to do."

Mrs Reuben took the curly head to her breast an instant and hugged it tight.

"Does Angela suspect?" she asked.

"She shows no sign of suspecting. Of course so many things have been happening. This engagement of her father and Miss Daly is enough to put anything out of her mind. She is the same Angela, always sweet and gentle. Time was I thought Angela's little cold ways the most beautiful thing in all the world. Now I think them cold. I think Hetty would be different."

He tossed back his head with a shame-faced

gesture, and turning away from his mother, he went and leant upon the mantelpiece.

"What am I to do?" he asked almost in a sullen voice. "If Angela cares for me I would do anything in the world to save Angela from the lightest grief. If Hetty cares for me,—mother, I am no fop, but I have sometimes thought that Hetty cared,—what am I to do?"

Mrs Reuben's heart ached for her son. It was indeed a difficult matter in which to advise him, since one or other of the girls must be sacrificed.

"Give me a few hours to think," she said. "To think and pray. After that, my son, I will advise you."

He knelt with her as she wished him, and with his head bent heard her pray that light might be vouchsafed to them so that they should wrong no one. He went away and left her then; and since he could not endure the quietness of the house and his own thoughts he went out for a long, hard, solitary walk. It took him a good many miles of distance, and in the end he was rather surprised to find that he was hungry. He stopped at a wayside inn and had some lunch—a lunch of bread and cheese and beer, which he enjoyed more than he had been enjoying his excellent meals of late.

Just about the time when he was standing up from his meal, which he had taken in a little rose-covered shed in the inn garden, another visitor was being announced to his mother in that room of healing and help. It was Angela. She looked disturbed. Mrs Reuben had not seen

her for some weeks, and it seemed to her that there was quite as sad a change in the girl as in her own Willie. Her heart throbbed in quick alarm. Had Angela found out that she had lost her lover, and did the loss mean the loss of her happiness? The mother could not help a certain proud feeling that her Willie was not a lover to be lightly lost.

"I was so glad to hear you were at home, Mrs Armytage," Angela began, "and I wouldn't let Mary put me in the drawing-room. I came straight in here to you."

"You did quite right, dear. I have not been very well of late, and as the children had a river picnic to-day I thought I would stay in and rest, and do a number of little things I have long been wanting to do—for instance, turning out those drawers."

She indicated the secretaire before which she was sitting.

"Now, I am so glad you have come in," she said. "We haven't had a talk for a long time. And Mary will bring you some tea with cream in it as you always liked it, a nice comfortable tea, and we shall enjoy it all by ourselves."

"I shall like to stay, Mrs Armytage," said Angela. "But I am sorry that you are not well. You do too much for all those children—for everybody; you take us all too much to heart. Is Willie also at the picnic?"

She asked the question timidly, with downcast eyes. Mrs Reuben was very fond of Angela. For a moment she said to herself that Angela

must not suffer; she could not bear Angela to suffer. Then she resigned herself. The Will would do the best possible for all of them.

"He was here a couple of hours ago," she said. "But Mary has told me that he went for a walk, and said he would not be in to luncheon. Perhaps he will be back before you go—in time to take you home."

"I am in trouble, Mrs Armytage, dear," Angela broke out suddenly, "and it is about Willie. No; you needn't look alarmed. It isn't anything Willie has done. You know Willie never could do anything that wasn't kind and true. It is only that I have made a horrible discovery. Dear Mrs Armytage, do you think that Willie cares very much for me?"

The mother faltered, began to say how devoted Willie had always been to Angela, broke down in face of the pleading eyes fixed upon her.

"Of course he loves you," she said. "How could he help it, sweet Angela?"

The next instant her conscience was troubling her for a disingenuous answer forced from her by her strong conviction that where Angela loved Angela must be loved.

"I want him not to," said Angela with a sudden burst of tears.

She held a shabby little dog's-eared note-book towards Mrs Armytage, then drew it back.

"No; I have no right to show it," she said. "I had no right to read it myself, but I surprised its whole secret when I opened it to see

what it was. It had been flung into the lake apparently, but perhaps it had not been flung far enough, for I found it just among the long grasses of the little island. Thank God, I found it. It is poor little Hetty's. Hetty cared about Willie, Mrs Armytage. Oh, what am I to do? Wasn't I a brute, a wretch, to take him from her?"

Mrs Reuben forgot to be scandalised at the strong language of the modern young woman which even Angela had acquired to some extent.

"My dear," she said. "How much do you care for my Willie?"

Angela turned red and pale.

"It isn't the question, dearest Mrs Armytage," she said; "the question is how much he cares for me. Don't you think he could love Hetty? That little brown mouse-like thing, how could any one hurt her? Oh dear, don't you think Willie will forgive me if I set him free, and in time will come to care for Hetty?"

"I think he will forgive you," Mrs Armytage said slowly.

Then she felt that she could not be anything but honest with the girl. Angela's eyes full of trouble were looking straight at her.

"My dear," she said. "I think you have something to forgive Willie, and you must forgive him because he has been in great trouble. I think he will turn to Hetty very soon. I think he suspected the child's fondness for him, and perhaps, perhaps, Angela, it attracted him."

"You mean he cares about Hetty as he was supposed to have cared for me?"

"He has been *very* unhappy, Angela. You must forgive him."

Angela's face lightened in the strangest way.

"He and Hetty have to forgive me," she said. "Do you think they will, dearest Mrs Armytage?"

A few days later the announcement was made that the engagement between Willie Armytage and Angela Corbett no longer existed.

The Duchess was delighted; but there was a drop of bitter in her cup.

"To think that Godfrey should not have chosen her!" she said. "The little Irish witch is all very well, but I wanted another Angel. And in the general shuffling and cutting for partners the oddest thing of all is that Angela, my girl Angela, should be the one left without a lover."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SACHEVARELL RETURNS.

FOR Anne during these days all was pure felicity.

"You will make an Englishwoman of me," she said laughingly to the crowd of well-wishers, who day after day called at Minster as though they could not see enough of Anne Daly while she was yet in her single estate. "What have I done to deserve such good-will?"

Some of her friends, Mrs Perkins and the Duchess among them, grumbled because there was nothing to do which could add anything to Anne's happiness. What was the good of offering her gifts when her bridegroom rained upon her all that the heart of woman could desire? Yet the gifts came all the same, gifts over which Anne shook her head in quiet moments, wishing that she might sell them and give the money to the poor.

"You shall be my almoner," said John Corbett. "Armytage, Armytage and Corbett flourishes like the green bay-tree. You shall give with both hands and I will not grumble."

The last cloud was removed from Anne's heart. The tenderest intimacy existed between her and her Cousin Brian. Madam knew now of his

marriage, and had written to Anne that she rejoiced in the prospect of having John Corbett for a grandson-in-law. About Brian she was taciturn, and that meant she was wounded. In a few days Anne would be by her side to staunch that wound, and win full forgiveness for Brian before he should return to be welcomed like the prodigal son.

At Culvers there was now inaugurated a day and night nursery of the most luxurious kind. A magnificent head-nurse with an assistant was installed there. Fortunately, behind her proud demeanour,—had not all her babies hitherto been titled?—she had a kind and simple heart, and she thought the baby's mother quite worthy to own the baby.

Lizzie, dressed by the smartest London shops, lived up to her gowns. She was very silent, and sitting in the shadow of Mrs Perkins as they drove about in the magnificent carriage or called at great houses it was not easy to detect anything wrong with Lizzie. Her smile served in lieu of speech, and her accent covered any small solecisms when she did speak. But soon the solecisms would be no more. Lizzie was learning for her boy's sake, putting all her heart into the work; and Miss May, the old governess from Minster, who had joined the circle at Culvers as nominal companion to Mrs Perkins, was in love with her gentle pupil.

"She teaches herself," she said to Mrs Perkins; "and, dear me, she is a charming creature."

Anne had spent her last afternoon at Culvers,

and had stood for the last time by the baby's cot, with its curtains of rose silk, to take her last look for some time at the heir to millions. The mother and grandmother stood by her, gloating down on the small, dimpled face,—framed by the real lace of the pillow trimming,—which was their world.

"He will have grown when I see him again," said Anne.

"He grows a great boy," said the grandmother. "He is as beautiful a baby as his father was before him."

Anne left the two women standing together on the gravel sweep in front of the hall-door as she drove away. Looking back she saw Mrs Perkins put an arm about her daughter-in-law's shoulder to lead her inside. She felt she had left nothing but happiness there, where had been such loneliness. And oh, what happiness, what kindness was in the world!

Only that morning a magnificent pink pearl, set amid opals and diamonds and forming a pendant, had come to her as a wedding gift from Ferdinand Olivarez. "Ask Corbett if he will permit me to give you this," said the accompanying script, "and tell him that I would never have given up if I had not known him to be the better man. It is right that the better man should win."

The generosity of it had brought tears to Anne's eyes, and she reproached herself for her old repulsion for the man. Her generous impulse made her write to him impulsively.

"I am proud now," she wrote, "of that I once rejected."

And when Olivarez had smiled over it and held it a moment to his coarse handsome lips, he had burnt it with a curious reverence. Anne certainly had a way of drawing the best out of those she came in contact with.

That morning, too, a weight had been lifted from her heart. There was a letter from Dr Glenn, which she read aloud joyously at the breakfast-table.

"Nurse Mary will be Mrs Glenn, please God, just about the time that you change your name to Corbett. She's as white as a bit of thistle-down, and as weak as a baby, but every day sees her a little less weak, a little less fragile. At first I trembled, even when we had pulled her back from the grave, lest a wind should blow her away from me. But she sits smiling, God bless her, and making the house bright as though her face had a light inside it. And the old mother says she'll be ready to depart in peace once Mary is Mrs Glenn, but we're not going to let her give us the go-by in that way. The grass is beginning to grow on the graves of the dead, and the living are hopeful. They're doing fine on the Inish; and they're growing fat on Hungry Foreland. And 'tis glad of the good news concerning you we all are, Miss Nan."

Meanwhile on that very afternoon, in Anne's absence, John Corbett received enlightenment on another subject.

Mrs Mason, the old housekeeper at Minster,

had been ill, ill with a mysterious low fever which worried Dr Pottinger a good deal.

On this afternoon he interviewed Mr Corbett on the subject.

"There's something on her mind," he said, "and I can't find out what it is. The nurse tells me that it is somehow connected with the young painter who has been working at your chapel. She talks of him when she is not conscious that she is talking aloud, and in her sleep. She raves about angels; I suppose the angels he was painting in the chapel."

"What interest can she have in Vallance and his angels?" Mr Corbett said in a slightly worried way. He was looking so radiant these days that worry seemed an incongruous thing to associate with him. "Perhaps, perhaps, doctor, it is not the painted angels who are in her mind. She is devoted to the Sachevarells, the original owners of Minster. The last Sachevarell was Miss Angel, from whom my daughter Angela is called. She nursed Miss Angel in her last illness. Tell me what I can do. I have a great esteem for Mrs Mason, and will do anything in my power."

"I have an idea that if you could bring young Vallance to her bedside he would do her more good than all my medicine," said the doctor, unheeding Mr Corbett's explanation.

"Ah, that is just the thing I can't do," the master of Minster said, and again the little cloud of worry fell over the clear shining of his face. "He is off, Pottinger, with only a word to me

to say that his inspiration has deserted him, and that for the present any attempt at painting would be sheer waste of time. I found my own cheque to him uncashed in its envelope on the mantelpiece in his room just where I had left it. As a matter of fact I owe him a great deal more than that. I have had the opinion of experts on the work. They praise it extravagantly. I thought to have given work to a poor artist whom Fate or Something greater brought to my doorstep. I find I have been enriching myself, playing the art patron with as much glory to myself as did the Medicis and those old fellows long ago; entertaining angels unawares, in fact. The young fellow's future was assured. He was to paint the walls of the Children's Hospital, The House of Hope, for the Duchess, as a commemoration of her son. Once his work becomes known he will, my experts say, command his own prices. There is to be an article on those angels of his in the 'Virtuoso' for September."

"Oh, indeed. I had not known the young fellow had so much in him," said the doctor, but faintly interested. "A pity if he's the unsteady wastrel sort. His going off like that seems rather like it. I wish we could find him for my patient's sake. Will you see her, sir? She seems to have a regard for you; she dries up at the nurse's leading questions. You know how suspicious they are. They never like the nurse either, no matter what is done for them."

"I shall certainly see her," said Mr Corbett. "I have a great regard for Mason, associations

with her too which I would not willingly have broken. When will it be?"

"If you could conveniently spare the time now. I know the patient is awake: and it would be a kindness to set the nurse free for a walk in the garden. Better have the old woman to yourself. She can be as tight as an oyster with us, I can tell you."

These were holiday times with Mr Corbett, and it was a time of year which had usually found him at the sea or at some German spa. But this summer, in the happy disturbance of his life, the old plans had been all upset. He was to be married quietly in a few weeks' time at Witch's Castle. The Abbé was to perform the marriage: Sir Brian Daly was to give his cousin away. In a day or two he was to take Anne over to Ireland. Meanwhile there was a deal to do with lawyers and settlements. As John Corbett said, he could not have believed there would be such a to-do about the marriage of a plain middle-class business man, even though the bride was the loveliest and most gracious woman on earth.

A little later he was sitting by Mrs Mason's bed, his hand laid kindly over the little skinny burning hand of the old woman. The windows were all open and the room full of the soft summer air. The curious, ordered quietness of the sick-room was in the atmosphere of the place; the only sounds were the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece, the purring of the housekeeper's cat, where it sat enjoying the un-

wonted luxury of the little bright fire which burnt in the grate although it was late summer.

"When are you going to get well, Mason?" Mr Corbett asked. "We all miss you, you know. Why, things are not the same at Minster without you at the head of affairs."

The old woman smiled faintly; she was gratified at the praise.

"You've been a kind master," she said. "I never thought to ha' been so happy under any one with all the Sachevarells dead and gone. And I hear, sir, you're to marry Miss Anne. I'm sure I wish you joy, sir. A sweeter lady hasn't walked this earth since Miss Angel Sachevarell left it."

She paused a moment as though the length of the speech had tired her; even in health Mason had the habit of taciturnity.

"Miss Angel would have been pleased, too," she said after the pause: "indeed maybe she's pleased where she is, if she knows about it. She was too sweet a lady not to wish you happiness, sir, as other people have it. She was never one to stand in the way of other people's happiness."

John Corbett heard her with some wonder. So she had known the love that had been the secret mainspring of his life all these years, and her words showed that she had understood. This plain, uneducated woman to understand! And how faithfully, how delicately, she had kept silence! The star that was Angel, although it had receded into the misty background of his life before the bewildering human happiness

that had suddenly flung its sunshine on his twilight way, had not left him, was not less sacred and less dear, would be always with him, with him and Anne.

He answered her gravely.

"Miss Angel would be glad, I am sure, Mason. Indeed, if I believed in dreams, I should say that she had come to me in dreams and smiled upon me. I am sure she knows that we remember her, you and I."

Suddenly the old woman clutched him by the sleeve.

"You dreamt of Miss Angel, sir," she said, and her eyes dilated. "May I make so bold as to ask if she spoke to you of Master Humphrey?"

"Master Humphrey!"

Mr Corbett's face told of his mystification.

"Yes, Master Humphrey, that's been painting your chapel. I knew him the minute I set eyes on him. 'You may call yourself what you like,' says I, 'but Master Humphrey Sachevarell is your name.' I spoke about it to Miss Anne, but she thought I only fancied it. But afterwards when he gave in to me that he was Master Humphrey,—he couldn't hold out long against his old Mason,—he bid me to keep his secret, and so I've kept it. But he's out on the world again now, him that should be master of Minster, and if he doesn't come back I'll die of it. I'd grown used to there being never a Sachevarell in the world before he came; and

I'd grown fond of you, Mr Corbett, sir, for what you'd done for Miss Angel, though I couldn't feel for you as I did for them; it isn't likely, is it? But for him to go away again was more than his old Mason could bear. If he were to know as how it was killing me I think he'd come back."

Tears overflowed the old woman's eyes and rolled down her thin cheeks.

"You're sure, Mason, sure?" Mr Corbett asked, in bewilderment. "You say Mr Vallance acknowledged to you that he was Humphrey Sachevarell?"

"That he was Mr Humphrey Sachevarell, Mr Anthony's son, Miss Angel's first cousin. You'll have heard of Mr Anthony, sir, that went away after the Squire was married."

"I remember to have heard of him."

Mr Corbett looked at Mason. There were no delusions in her tear-washed eyes. At this moment she was free of the fever.

"But why did he keep it a secret? Why did he go away?" he burst out after a minute or two of thought.

"He came back to see the old place, sir, and to paint bits of it for himself. And it wasn't likely, being poor as he was, that he'd tell his name in a place where the Sachevarells were like kings. As for his going away, sir, I humbly ask your pardon. Master Humphrey went away because he fell in love with Miss Angela. I knew how 'twould be,—a dear, sweet, pretty

young lady, as like Miss Angel as if she'd been her own daughter—the minute he set eyes on her. The Sachevarells were always like that. Into love in a minute and never out of it again. Look at his own father!"

"And Angela?" said John Corbett, rather to himself than to her. He had had a conversation with Angela that morning which had somewhat perturbed, while not wholly displeasing him. Was this why Angela had broken her engagement with Willie Armytage? It seemed likely enough.

"Miss Angela, sir? I think Miss Angela is as fond of him as him of her. But then there was Mr Willie Armytage. Indeed, sir, 'tis all of a tangle; and I've thought of it till my old head has ached, many a time. Why, I had every one of your children in my arms, sir, before it was an hour old. It takes away the liberty, in a manner, of speaking. Mr Corbett, sir, if Mr Willie Armytage and Miss Hetty were to marry, 'twould be more of a love match. I often wondered Miss Angela didn't see it."

Once again Mr Corbett took the old servant's hand in his.

"There can be no question of a liberty, Mason," he said kindly, "between you and any member of my family. I may tell you that Miss Angela has broken her engagement; and I know I can trust you to be silent about the affairs of all those children."

Mrs Mason's eyes were lifted in thanksgiving.

"And Mr Humphrey, sir?" she asked.

"I owe a great deal to the Sachevarells, as no one knows better than you, Mason. I shall seek out Mr Humphrey. I should say that his future was my affair if it were not that his future is safe without me. They tell me he is going to be a great man. But anything I can add to his success will be done."

"If you bring him back, sir, it will mean giving him Miss Angela."

The old woman lifted herself on her elbow in her eagerness.

"I will bring him back. Isn't that enough for the present, Mason? Get well, and believe that Mr Humphrey is coming back. If things are as you say, if the last of the Sachevarells is what I hope and trust he is, I shall put no difficulties in the way."

He left old Mason smiling on her pillow as though she saw Heaven opened. Dr Pottinger's prescription for his patient had been incredibly successful.

After leaving her he had an interview with Angela, and learned all he wanted to know. Then he arranged for a few days' absence; there was just enough time before he need escort Anne to Ireland; and set out on the search for the lost Sachevarell.

He had not so very far to go. The cheque which Humphrey Sachevarell had left unopened on the mantelpiece of his room would have carried him out of John Corbett's reach perhaps.

As it was, by the time he had emptied out his purse to Mrs Thrapston at the Sachevarell Arms he had little enough left to travel on.

Indeed, when Mr Corbett came up with him on the third day of his search, he was standing on a couple of planks set up on supports which rested upon a table, painting the sign-board of an inn to pay for his supper and bed. A row of swallows sat on a window-sill of the gable above his head. He was hatless, and Mr Corbett, looking at him unobserved, saw all of a sudden a likeness to Miss Angel in the uplifted face. It gave him the sharpest thrill, although he was Anne Daly's affianced husband, and, as he said gratefully, the proudest and happiest man on earth.

"When you have quite finished, Mr Humphrey Sachevarell," he called up in his quiet way.

The painter left the nose of the victor of Culloden but half-mellowed and came down looking rather shame-faced.

"You've given me a pretty chase after you," said John Corbett, eyeing him keenly. He did not like the lad the less for the traces of trouble and pain that had sharpened the beauty of his young face since last they had met.

"You said . . . Humphrey Sachevarell," the young fellow said, stammering.

"That is your name, is it not?"

"I did not mean you to know, but that is my name."

He stood with the dripping palette and brush

in his hand, his eyes lowered with a shyness that became him.

"You had better finish the Duke," said John Corbett, "while I order some food and drink. You are coming back with me?"

"I had not meant to, sir."

"Well, you will come all the same. And first, after you have finished your job, you will come in and talk to me. I have some questions to ask you."

The questions presumably were answered to John Corbett's satisfaction, for after the conversation was over, while the two sat amicably over cold roast beef and beer, the last cloud was lifted from the young man's face.

"I may tell you," said John Corbett, "that Angela bid me tell you you were to come and finish the angels."

"Sir," said the young man, in great agitation, "you know what that message involves."

"I know something of it," said John Corbett, quietly cutting himself another slice of the excellent beef. "And I may tell you that Angela and young Armytage have come to the conclusion that they acted rather hastily. When we know you better,—and I have no doubt that you will prove as good a fellow as you seem to me,—there will be no objection on my part if you and Angela should care for each other. I owe a deal to your family, Mr Humphrey Sachevarell."

The young artist was not long in proving himself, for not quite six months later Mrs Mason,

with her own hands, cooked the wedding breakfast for Mr Humphrey's wedding.

And so another Angel Sachevarell reigns at Minster, for Minster was Mr Corbett's magnificent wedding-gift to his daughter. As he said, with all the marriages among his young people, he hardly required a great place like Minster; and then his wife's heart was in her own beautiful, desolate country. A smaller house near Elsdon, and an Irish estate, best suited them.

So far all the marriages have turned out happily. The Duchess has taken Lady Godfrey and her black-eyed baby to her heart of hearts, and has been heard to say that she would not exchange her even for Angela. There never was any doubt about the happiness of John and Arthur Corbett and Rachel and Miriam Armytage. Willie Armytage has won his little wife's forgiveness long ago for having at one time preferred her sister. As for John Corbett and Anne, it would seem indeed as though Miss Angel looked down on them out of Heaven and prayed for their happiness, so full and so complete is it. It remains only to be said that Madam Daly took Brian's marriage in the most unexpected way.

"Sure," she said, "like seeks like. And weren't his fathers kings long ago? And is there anything wonderful in his picking up a queen for a wife?"

She even talks of a voyage to Aloa, since by the laws of her kingdom Queen Amaua may not

leave it. The most gratifying thing of all is that the heir-apparent has as fine a red head, as fine a pair of blue eyes as ever a baby was blessed with.

"He'll be talking Irish next," says his delighted great-grandmother.

THE END.

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